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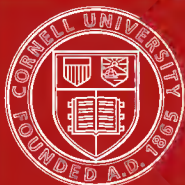
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## The king of Andaman;



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THE KING OF ANDAMAN



# THE KING OF ANDAMAN

*A SAVIOUR OF SOCIETY*

BY

J. MACLAREN COBBAN

AUTHOR OF A REVEREND GENTLEMAN, <sup>—</sup>THE RED SULTAN, ETC.

"He weaves, and is clothed with derision"

SWINBURNE, *Atalanta in Calydon*



NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

1895

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TO MY FRIEND

ROBERT ALAN MOWBRAY STEVENSON

WHOSE APPROVAL IN ALL THAT PERTAINS TO ART

IS DEARER TO THOSE WHO KNOW HIM

THAN THE APPLAUSE OF A WHOLE THEATRE OF OTHERS





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# THE KING OF ANDAMAN.

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## PROLOGUE.

### I.

#### WIND AND THE WINDING OF THE WEB.

ILKASTANE is now built about with houses of the genteel villa description, possessing bow-windows, door-bells, iron railings, a shrub or two, and all the other tokens of respectability. It is now practically one in life and interest, as it is one in corporation, with the busy city of Inverdoon. But in the year 1848 it was a wretched and rather remote suburb, the thread of whose connection with the city, both in life and interest, was of extreme tenuity. The year '48 is memorable in home annals for the final, desperate, and unsuccessful attempt of the Chartists to compel attention to their demands by other than "moral force." None had been more reckless, and none felt their failure more keenly than the Chartist weavers of Ilkastane. There were other crafts-folk there besides weavers who were Chartists, but the suburb was so distinctively a weaving community, and weaving seemed so inseparable from Chartism, that weaver and Chartist were synonymous—at least, in the timid and prejudiced view of the neighbouring townspeople.

Ilkastane in itself was a hard, forbidding place, though it had field and stream and tree at its doors. Its single street, "the Loan," with its open gutter on either side, and its gaping, dark-mouthed closes, was built of rough-hewn granite, plastered ("harled" is the word) with rough-cast, which, since it is now seldom seen, may be explained as a

kind of thin mortar mixed with rough gravel, rendering a wall covered with it scarifyingly painful to lean against. Its people were like unto it; in the main, a large-boned, rough-hewn folk, gritty of temper, and rough-cast in manner. Long before the Chartist days, the weavers of Ilkastane had a reputation for riot and devilry—and that in a city itself unmannerly and riotous enough. Respectable townsfolk would rather pass round than through it; if ever a well-dressed stranger adventured into it he had to run the gauntlet of rude, glowering eyes and uncouth, discourteous speech, flung sideways at him; and if he left it without some of its dirt higher than his heels he might reckon himself lucky. He might, indeed, see the young people slapped and cuffed for their rudeness by the women, but by no means better instructed by their example. Even the ministers and missionaries of the town, who, in the fervour of the new Evangelical zeal of that period, launched themselves upon Ilkastane, had to withdraw baffled, though not maltreated. The Ilkastanians had too much theoretic respect for the Kirk, and the Free Kirk both, not to respect their messengers. The earnest students and “probationers” who visited Ilkastane got entangled in argumentative quandaries with the weavers about “Election” and “Free Will,” or were drily repulsed by the wives, who scarcely paused at their winding-wheels to say, “Na; we dinna want no tracts. Na; we’ve neither time nor claithes to gang to the Kirk.” So, what with rude manners, rough speech, Sabbath-breaking, Chartism and poverty, Ilkastane seemed, to all church-going, psalm-singing, well-dressed people of Inverdoon, completely self-devoted to the devil and his works.

When, therefore, the Chartists of town and suburb left off assembling in waste places to drill with pike and banner, or to be harangued by inflamed and ill-dressed orators, when they left off marching up and down to the detriment of business, and the extreme disquiet of dounce, aproned shop-folk, when they were compelled to skulk to their lairs by the uplifted hand and whip of law and order, the excellent public who paid rates and taxes, who had clothes to their back, food for their belly, and money in their purse, breathed

freely again and openly rejoiced. Some of these excellent rate-paying people even went further, and denounced as arch-traitors and ringleaders of the sedition several Chartists whom they knew by name, and gave directions to the agents of the Law in their attempts to lay hands on them, directions which took them invariably to Ilkastane or its neighbourhood.

The quality of mercy meted out to the Chartists of the north and of the south, who had already been arrested and tried, did not encourage those of Ilkastane to let themselves be quietly caught when they knew they were wanted. So it came to pass that two Ilkastane men, who had been set down as notably dangerous and influential, were assiduously sought for without being found. They were George Hutcheon and Fergus O'Rhea. Neither of them was a weaver. O'Rhea, indeed, as his name suggests, was not even a native of Ilkastane. He had visited these parts as a Chartist agitator, and had remained as inspirer and director of Chartist action. He was commonly believed to be an Irishman; but he disclaimed that honour, saying he was only an Ulsterman, and, but for his name, as Scotch in blood as any of them. He was a "physical force man," and had done more, it was reckoned, to ruin "The Cause," than any half-dozen besides. George Hutcheon was a "moral force man," but very subject to the influence of O'Rhea. He was regarded as a scholar and a gentleman, because he had been to college and had never hardened his hands with labour. He was a young man of romantic feeling, and fluent, flowery speech; and before his public appearance as a Chartist leader, he had been a student at Dunblair for the Episcopalian ministry.

It was at the end of October that the authorities in the city had word sent them anonymously that efforts were being made by the friends of the two Chartist leaders to raise money—to send them out of the country, no doubt—and that both men would be certain to be about Ilkastane on the Saturday, when money would be given them by James Hutcheon, the brother of George. It was probable, the message said, they would then attempt to make their

escape. The Fiscal and the New Police were weary of this Chartist-hunting, but it was necessary for them to seem to go through it with alacrity. Arrangements were made to effect an arrest on the Saturday.

In the meantime, the Ilkastane "loan" lay full in the sunshine. Windows were rattling, and doors slamming, and dust and leaves flying, for it was very windy.

Windy! The blast, tearing down through the close called Wilson's, and turning the corner suddenly, almost snatched the mutch from Kirsty Kyle's grey head, and slammed the entry door in her face, as she came forth for her Saturday's sand; and it so beset the sand-cadger's pony that, with his thin mane and tail driven this way and that, it was all he could do to keep his feet. As if with a wild guffaw at the quandary of the old woman and the old horse, the wind flew up Hutcheon's close, spread its great flapping wings and sped away over the low weaving-shops, away—tearing, whistling, howling, catching and bearing away the vile odours of Poverty and Chartism—away, over potato-patches and kail-yards, bare fields of oat-stubble, and bleak pastures, over the northern end of the town, to the wide links, the sands, and the sea.

Kirsty, tying her mutch closer, reached the sand-cart, little disturbed.

"Some windy, man," said she, looking the cadger straight in the eye.

The man glanced up the close, noting the progress of the blast, and said,—

"Windy, ay. But it's no so windy but I've seen it windier mysel'. But ye ken, mistress, what they say?—'It's aye an ill wind that blaws naebody good.' And that's what I'm just thinkin'; for it's lucky that it's windy for some folk, I expect."

He put his face in saying that very close to Kirsty's.

"What does the man mean?" said she, holding back and staring at him.

"I ken ye can be trusted, Kirsty," said the cadger. "I ha'e an errand for Maister Hutcheon. I canna see him mysel', 'cause he's no in, I ken that."

"It's mair than I ken. Weel, I suppose ye want me to do your errand for ye. What is't?"

The man looked at her a moment as if weighing her trustworthiness.

"This'll do," said he, tearing a piece of paper from his pocket, putting some sand in it and twisting it up, and then tearing another piece, finding a stone, and twisting it up. "See Maister Hutcheon as soon as ye can, and gi'e him them, and say, '*That* if it's windy' (putting his hand on the stone packet), '*and that* if it's no windy' (putting his hand on the sand packet).

"Weel; what mair?"

"Naething."

"I'm to say naething a body can understand? If I'm no to be trusted wi' a reasonable word, ye can do your gowk's errand yoursel'!"

She threw the two packets into his cart.

"Kirsty," said the man, "it's a matter o' life or death," and he returned the two packets into her hand.

"What am I to say?" insisted she.

He repeated his former words, and then at once resumed crying "Sa-and!" and urged on his pony.

She saw something in the man's eye which made her turn; an officer of the New Police was passing.

"Some windy," said she to him by way of salutation, as she recrossed the gutter and entered her own door.

Some windy, indeed! In a little while it was a storm of wind, the like of which the old asthmatic, M'Kay, could not remember for fifty years. And all the while the sun was shining brightly and there was not a speck of cloud in the sky. Chimney-pots and tiles were whipped from the houses and dashed into the loan. Sharp dust and stour whirled about the person and into the eyes and throat. Yet the loan and the door-steps were busy with feet and clattering pails, for it was Saturday, "*dies iræ, dies illa*" of washing, and scrubbing and sanding floors. The schoolmaster was execrated for resting on Saturday, of all days in the week, and the children were hustled out into the wind, which, in its large, clumsy way, made merry with them, running them

off on errands they never meant to go, driving them against sharp corners, and whirling them into dusty nooks.

The afternoon was wearing late when Kirsty Kyle again came to her door to look out for "Maister Hutcheon." The Hutcheons (for reasons which shall be explained hereafter) were held in great regard by the Ilkastanians, and Kirsty was especially anxious now to fulfil the commission she had undertaken for the elder—the simpler, and the quieter of the two.

"Maister Hutcheon" at length came striding down the loan, with his hand clapped on his broad bonnet. How he buffeted the wind and forced his way in spite of it and its flying missiles, as if he enjoyed the encounter! He turned to pass up the close called by his own name, and then the wind thought to drive him before it; but he laughed a low, solemn laugh, leaned trustfully back upon it, and kept his own pace. The fickle, nimble wind, however, faced him again and—

"Tak' care, James, tak' care," said Kirsty Kyle, with her eye on him. "Dinna lean upon the wind, man. It's little support to a trustin' back. Lippenin'\* the wind'll be the ruin o' ye. I've a bit figment o' an errand to ye. That (a bit stane) if it's windy; that (a wee puckle sand) if it's no windy; and if ye can mak' sense o' that ye've mair head than maist folk."

"Wha gave ye't?"

"Cadger Jock."

"Oh, ay; it's a' right, Kirsty, I understand. I'm obliged to ye, Kirsty. Yes, I'll see to't. And, Kirsty, I doubt we'll ha'e the New Police down on us. If ye'd just keep your e'e on the loan, Kirsty."

And Hutcheon went on his way and left Kirsty to fight with the wind for the possession of her mutch and little tartan shawl.

Anon a dead calm fell, and through it there rose a strange eerie sound—a sustained, plaintive moan, as of a creature in pain. It seemed as if the wind had subdued itself to

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\* Trusting.



listen. Hearing it, the women of Hutcheon's close ceased their talk and their noisy occupations to congratulate each other on its happy meaning. It was the sound of the winding of a web.

"Eh, sirs!" said old Kirsty Kyle, putting her head out of window and addressing her gossips, "doesna that sound do the heart good like a psalm?"

"It's the first wab this six months!" answered one of the women.

The six months' sharp hunger and want of work, wild hope and black despair were at an end; now there would be regular work and regular wages, regular meals and regular sleep, even if there were only little of either one or another—that was the meaning, for the women, of that melancholy sound of the winding of the web. It meant for the men something altogether different—as different as the gloom of the weaving-shop was from the sunshine of the close. Judging from the aspect of those engaged in the operation of winding, there might have been written over the door of the weaving-shop, "*Leave hope behind all ye who enter here.*"

The "shop" was a large, low-roofed, chilly place, with a faint earthy smell, as of a tomb. The looms (of which there were more than a dozen), with their dark beams and cross-pieces, and their cords and threads and finer filaments, many and regular, which caught the light struggling in through the small, paper-patched windows, looked mysterious and awful enough to be those at which the Fates eternally sit weaving the destinies of men. Within and about the loom in the furthest corner (all the rest stood silent and deserted) were six men. Two of them were at the end of the beam, turning it with a spoke, slowly bending each to the other like automata, and looking enormously tall in the gloom, with their heads almost touching the low, black ceiling. Two others stood before the beam, letting the coils of yarn out with a tight hold, hand over hand. The great coils rose, writhing like snakes, from the piles at the feet of the men, glided slowly across the loom, round a smooth pole, and then through a "guide" (held by

two other men), which with its teeth separated the coils into very small skeins and spread them out upon the beam. The beam moaned and complained, but the six men performed their duty in grim silence, without so much as a look at each other. For them the winding of the web meant the surrender of all they had struggled, spoken, and starved for—a bitter return to the house of bondage.

“Wo-o-oa!” (The sound might have been the cry of a sad Jeremiah to a doomed people.)

The beam was silent; the men who were turning it stood still. James Hutcheon (one of the two who sat and held the “guide”) had spied some entanglement in the web which his patient fingers unravelled. Old M'Cree glowered through his brass-rimmed spectacles from the other end of the guide in angry impatience with the delay.

“Recht!” cried he in a rough, full-mouthed voice, and round again turned the beam, moaning and honing;—and so the winding of the web went on.

After some time the moaning beam was again brought to pause, and the men were struck into a hunted, desperate aspect by a loud “Stop!” and by the vision of three men with bright brass buttons.

“James Hutcheon!” called the foremost of the three.

“That’s me,” answered Hutcheon calmly.

To which the man replied by turning a blue sheet of paper to the light. While he was reading from it Hutcheon laid his hand on the coil next him and gently pulled it; the other end was in the hand of Steven, an old soldier with one eye. Hutcheon thus drew Steven’s attention and shot a quick, meaning glance at the wall near Steven’s head. Steven put out his hand and pulled a loose string, which was instantly drawn up somewhere out of sight. All that took but a few seconds, and the officer the while was reading his paper, which proved to be a warrant to search the premises of James Hutcheon for the outlawed persons of George Hutcheon and Fergus O’Rhea.

## II.

### "THERE IS A SPIRIT IN MAN."

"THIS is my premises," said Hutcheon, "this, and up the stairs. Ye're free to do your errand. Ye see, there's nobody ye want here."

The officer seemed not sure of that. He took the names of all present; then he satisfied himself there was no one hidden about any of the idle looms, or in the dug-out beds in which the treadles worked, or in the coal-hole under the stairs. At length all three ascended to Hutcheon's living rooms. Hutcheon rose to go also.

"They might tak' something that's no set down in their paper," said he in answer to the silent inquiry all his comrades turned on him.

While Hutcheon and the officers were in the rooms above, the others remained silent in rigid attention, with their eyes half-raised to the ceiling, and following in fancy the movements here and there overhead. This alertness was maintained till the police walked across the floor to the further—the sleeping—room, when those below exchanged a look of marked emphasis, as much as to say, "Now!" But presently the police were heard descending the stairs, and then the strained attention of those waiting at the loom relaxed, and M'Cree sucked up a great pinch of snuff into his resonant Roman nose, and cleared his throat with a loud "Bu-h-h!"

"Weel," said he when Hutcheon returned, "that's ower. *Bu-h-h!*" (M'Cree always made great ado about clearing his throat.) "I would like fine to ken whaur that deevil O'Rhea is."

"Gin ye dinna ken, ye winna tell, Saunders," said Steven, the one-eyed soldier. "By Jingo, ye winna!" and he cast with his one eye many rapid, fiery winks at his neighbours.

"If there's one Chartist mair than anither deserves to be ta'en and tried for his life," said M'Cree with full-mouthed emphasis, "it's Fergus O'Rhea. *Bu-h-h!* Ye a' ken he ruined the Cause wi' his violence."

"Ye're wrong, and wrong again, and ten times wrong," said Hutcheon.

"Hoot!" said old Loudoun, fidgeting—it was his web that was being delayed. "What for should we gang ower that ground again? The Cause is as dead as a herrin': What matters now wha did it? The Cause is dead——"

"But we're living, Loudoun, man!" exclaimed Hutcheon.

"Ay, we're livin'," said Loudoun, with a disconsolate shrug, "so it behoves us to get something to live upon. Ca' on!"

So these two outer men resumed their spoke, the winding of the web went on again, and there was no sound heard for some time but the weary, plaintive moan of the beam. They all sank back into the apathy from which the interlude of the police had scarce roused them. Their hunger-marked unshaven faces reflected no indignation, scarcely even interest; from under their grizzled eyebrows (all except Hutcheon and Steven were over forty) looked only the primal instinct of a strong race—the grim resolve to live somehow. And the two at the beam slowly rose and bent; hand over hand passed out the coils, untwining and spreading out fan-wise as they approached the "guide," to be drawn through its many teeth and laid upon the beam, which sustained its monotonous moan.

Gradually the familiar movement and sound seemed to wake memory and feeling in all the winders. They continued sad, silent, and absorbed, but a flash of the eye, a grim compression of the mouth, or a hitch of the shoulder as if to ease it under a burden, showed that their minds were awake. If their thoughts had found voice they would have spoken thus: "Are not this winding of the web and its future weaving a type of our life? Our web has been drawn through the teeth of circumstance and spread upon the beam, and it has been woven into fabric, as this will be, piece by piece; piece by piece it has been taken from us as this will be taken by its owner—and now there is left us nothing but the thrums! There is no man regardeth our case; none careth whether we live or die."

But suddenly there came upon their ears, like a beautiful

embroidery wrought on the monotonous moaning of the beam, a soft, melodious, measured sound. It was distinctly from above, and at once the winders guessed what it was and who discoursed it. It was from a three-foot marvel of a flute, which they had often heard played with exquisite feeling by the same mouth and fingers as then compelled its music—those of Hutcheon's out-lawed brother. The voice of the flute was at first distressed and bewildered as their feelings, but it ended in a pæan of triumph; it was as the voice of toiling humanity—the voice of sad reminiscence and shameful defeat, but defeat like that of Antæus, who drew new hope and strength from his overthrow; it was the voice of their hearts as they glanced at each other and then turned their eyes away.

The flute passed from one air to another. It sounded a quick march—"Over the mountains, over the main!" M'Cree and Loudoun exchanged a glance. That was the air to which they, when thoughtless striplings with a mind for glory, marched out of Ilkastane to help the great Wellington to beat Napoleon on the battlefields of Europe. Who would ever guess that old Sandy Loudoun, with his bald crown, his thin grey whisker brushed carefully forward, his watery eye, and his broken, disconsolate manner—that he had ever been a wild cat in a Highland regiment, that he had been one of those who had dashed into the famous fight clinging to a trooper's stirrup?

The flute blew out the wild notes of "*The Campbells are coming!*" which made the simple, cheery Steven flush and wink, and whistle in unison.

Ah, thought the old men as they wagged their heads at each other, those were the tunes—stirring, warlike, patriotic things—with which Governments befooled them. They drew them skipping and dancing forth to do their will—to strive and cry, to shed their blood and waste their life—and all for what? To be cast aside and trodden on! But, ha! they were not slaves yet! Fools they might be, but slaves never! —"*En avant! Enfants de la Patrie!*"

The music had flown into the blood-stirring strain of

"*La Marseillaise*." It made their breath come quicker, and the dormant fever of revolt wake in their veins. They looked at each other and set their teeth hard. What wild impulses strove in them? Such as had helped to bring them to their present pass of humiliation and want! A growl, which was half-sneer, half-snarl, passed among them as they glanced at each other.

"Mad French thing!" muttered Loudoun, loud enough to be heard.

They had let the hope that inspired that music move them before, and what had come of it? What had all their vows, all their efforts—their marches and meetings, their drums and their speeches—brought them but the bitter lesson that they will take who have the power, and they will keep who can? But still sounded the "mad French thing," stirring their blood in spite of them—" *En avant! Enfants de la Patrie!*" Surely, woe to the people the best of whose life lies in remembrance! There was a future still to be fought for and won!—" *En avant! Enfants de la Patrie!*" sounded the flute like the clear pipe of an organ, and then in accompaniment, "*Marchons! Marchons!*" swelled out in a rich, bass voice from somewhere close at hand.

"Wha's that?" exclaimed M'Cree, glaring at Hutcheon.

A step was heard ascending the stairs, and then a loud voice addressing the player of the flute:

"By Jingo!" cried Steven, "it's O'Rhea!"

"Wo-o-oa!" called Hutcheon, as the end of the coils came close to his guide.

So the web was wound; the spell was broken. The moan of the beam and the music above had both ceased, and disappeared like memory and hope; there remained only the hard and dismal realities of the present.

Hutcheon straightway left the weaving-shop and ascended the stairs. M'Cree, without a word or look to the others, resolutely followed him, upon which Steven, distributing nods and winks to those left behind, followed M'Cree. O'Rhea was talking in a loud voice to George Hutcheon in the garret.

"By Gosh!" exclaimed Steven, aside to James Hutcheon, "he's been at the whisky."

"Who said whisky?" asked O'Rhea, turning quickly. "Have you got a drop? If you have, for God's sake give me a mouthful, for I'm parched and poisoned by some fiendish distillation of vitriol and naphtha I laid hands on on the top shelf in Steven's shanty."

"What for hae ye come oot?" asked Hutcheon in return. "D'ye not ken the police have been round the loan and in here spierin' for ye? And ye risk meeting them for the sake o' a suck at a whisky-bottle!"

"*Bu-h-h!*" said M'Cree, who had been impatiently clearing his throat ready to throw in his word. "That's jusht it!"

"What's just it, my patriarch?" demanded O'Rhea. He turned a full front upon him, and the light fell upon a figure that would make a man look and think twice wherever it was seen; especially would the strong fighting head and shoulders, the clipped red beard, the abundant crop of uncontrollable red hair, and the grey-blue eye with its fearless expression of alertness and intelligence. "What's just it?" he asked. "I'm always risking life and limb for something no better than a toothful of spirits; if that's what you mean, you're right. I've always done that, and, by the living Jingo! I daresay I'll go on doing it till the end of the chapter."

"*Bu-h-h!*" resumed M'Cree.

"Ye used to read your Bible, M'Cree, I suppose, before ye became a wicked Chartist and imperilled your immortal soul. Well, perhaps ye remember something of a lunatic that went into dry places, seeking rest and finding none. Now, that's what every mortal idiot of us has been doing since our plans came to grief. I've been in confounded dry places, and so have ye all;—and that, my Hutcheon, is what I've come out for, catch me who can. I want to make this a wet place for every mother's son and bold Chartist among us. We must get cheered up, and set the fire of hope burning in our bodies, if not in our souls, before we set out on a cold sea-voyage this blessed night. So, Hutcheon,

bring forth the usquebagh, if you've got a spark of Chartist or of Scotsman left in ye. Ye think the Cause is lost."

"And I tak' leave to think," began M'Cree, but he was cut short by O'Rhea.

"Ye're wrong, M'Cree. Ye'll see in the twinkling of a bed-post that the Cause *must* be alive so long as we're alive, and have the spunk of men in us!"

"Recht for you, O'Rhea! By Gosh!" said Steven, with a violent wink, "he's recht!"

"True! Quite true!" said George Hutcheon, though somewhat sadly.

The elder Hutcheon said nothing, but went to a little locker for the whisky.

"They think we're defeated, trodden on, squashed quite flat and dead like toads that a cart-wheel has gone over. They're wrong; we're as lively—in a jiffy we'll be livelier than we've been for a year. George and me are going away; what of that? We're only drawing back for a spring, and in a while we'll come back with a bound and a roar, and we'll carry the Cause in some shape or other. How like an eagle in a dovecot, we'll flutter all their Volsicians in Corioli!"

"*Coryly?*" said M'Cree. "Isna that awa' foreign? *Bu-h-h!* We want nae foreigners; if we canna manage by oursel's, we'd better let be. We've had ower muckle trock wi' foreigners."

"Right, M'Cree, as always," said O'Rhea, promptly. "Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow!"

What with the influence of O'Rhea's abounding vitality and vigorous speech, and the fire infused by the whisky, these pale, depressed Chartists perked themselves up and were ready to buffet all conceivable difficulties with as much valour as ever. In less than half an hour they were all in full flow of heady talk, discussing forcibly the disappointments of the past and the prospects of the future, even formulating schemes which should at length bring success to the Cause. What these were we need not trouble to note, for they never came to anything. Of more consequence is it to observe that while James Hutcheon, M'Cree, and



Steven thus earnestly mingled opinions and ideas, and sublimated them with the "mountain dew" of Lochnagar, the man who had brought this result about was rapidly talking aside to George Hutcheon. There was little chance of their being overheard.

## III.

## THE THREADS OF FATE.

"GEORGE," said he, "I must tell you something. I've promised to take Kitty with us."

"Kittie M'Cree with us!" exclaimed George. "What nonsense, Fergus! It's impossible."

"Let me show ye how possible it is. She wants to go; I want her to go; and she will be no expense to us, because, ye know, she has some money of her own."

"I know all that, Fergus," said George. "No, I won't listen to ye. Ye've got such a tongue that I believe ye could persuade me to that or anything. And ye see how it would be. If she went with us, M'Cree would think it was with me, because he has always thought me her sweetheart. No, I can't do it; I won't listen to it."

"Very well," said O'Rhea, in a tone of some offence. "I must find another way."

"Don't do that, Fergus, or—— Oh, yes; I know it's not often I have been able to find it in me to go against you in anything, but in this I do, and must. And I'm not thinking of myself only. See, Fergus, man, where we are with it all. We've no immediate prospect——"

"Haven't we? The whole world's before us, man!"

"We're hunted——"

"Let them hunt!"

"If we get as far as America or Australia we'll have to live for a good while as it's not fit for any respectable woman to live."

"Shall we, George, my boy?" laughed O'Rhea confidently. "No fear, sir—no fear."

"Maybe ye're a proficient at making a living," said George, brought somewhat to a pause. "However," he continued, "if I can't persuade you, you sha'n't persuade me. And, moreover, as Kitty's old sweetheart I won't see her and old M'Cree and myself put upon."

"*'Put upon,'* George, is a considerable word. But it's a chance word, I believe, that usually means more than you intend it at this particular moment to mean, so I'll let it pass. But come, George, my boy; look me in the face and listen to a word or two from me."

"Not a word, Fergus," answered George, and kept his eyes as resolutely turned from him as a toper might from the bottle that tempts him to excess. "And there is but one thing now to be said, and sorry I am that you make me say it," he continued hurriedly. "To furnish us with money my brother has hypothecated every stick and stone there is left of Hutcheon property, and it goes sore against the grain wi' me to take it; but I'll take it—on the promise to Jamie to pay it back—I'll take it and we'll share it to the last penny if we set out by ourselves and travel as we were going to do. But if you insist on your notion about Kitty, I swear to you, Fergus, I'll turn round here and tell them all about it and refuse to take the money or to stir a stump either with or without ye; we'll bide where we are and dree our weird!"

He gave one look at O'Rhea to see how he took it. He was evidently smitten with surprise; he raised his brows and let his lip drop an instant and then he seemed cheerful again.

"All right, my boy, all right," he said. "I see you mean it, by George! so I'll say no more."

"And you'll give up the idea?"

"Give it up, of course; what else?"

"And if Kitty's expecting to hear from you, let her know it can't be."

"To be sure it can't be, and she must know it."

"But ye'll let her know, Fergus. Shall I go and tell her?"

"By the living Jingo, this is too much, George! Yes; this is too much!"

And he rose in a rage, strode to the other side of the room and absently handled the tools on Hutcheon's bench. This movement attracted the attention of the others, and O'Rhea turned to share in their talk. George Hutcheon, meanwhile, sat still, perplexed in spite of his declared resolution, and not a little displeased with himself.

He had refused Fergus "upon instinct" and impulse, rather than for well-considered reasons. His friend had some months since taken his sweetheart Kitty from him. It was but an aggravated instance of that large, good-natured acquisitiveness which distinguished O'Rhea, in which people acquiesced as they do in the action of a familiar law of nature, that which decrees that the greater has more attractive force than the less. George had recognised the inevitable; he had not complained; his attention had been taken up with other things, and he had not thought till now that he had keenly felt the loss. But now upon O'Rhea's proposal there had leapt up a very resolute spirit of resentment and jealousy. Besides, there were these curious attendant circumstances which were hinted at in their conversation. O'Rhea's courtship of Kitty was of a secret nature, mainly because it would be certain to be absolutely forbidden if it were known by her father; for M'Cree had a notable dislike and suspicion of O'Rhea, which had probably no better ground than the instinctive hatred one great man feels towards another. M'Cree, of course, saw no reason why Kitty should be courted by anybody. She was only one-and-twenty, and M'Cree thought he had an inalienable right to the fingering of the small "tocher" which an elderly admirer had left her. Going over all this ground again in his thoughts, George ended by reaffirming to himself his resolution. Kitty must not go with them; if he could give her up before, Fergus could give her up now without great pain. But his generosity made him think of a little concession—why should he not suggest to Fergus that he should write to Kitty to come to them when they had reached some destination, if she cared to brave the journey? He hesitated

a little over this, for he was afraid he might weakly yield the whole question if it were re-opened. After a little while, however, he went over to O'Rhea, and made his suggestion.

"All right, my boy," said O'Rhea aloud. "Time enough to talk of that. Let's say no more about it. Sit down and have another glass."

The Saturday's marketing in town and suburb was over, and all Ilkastane seemed asleep, when from the river-banks, the fields, the haughs, and the roads, the winds came creeping back upon the despised Chartist lair, like an assaulting midnight army. The signal was given; there was a rush and a roar; the stout granite walls were firm, but the roofs quivered at the shock, and people lay on their backs broad awake and ready to spring to their feet as the sounds of the strife increased and approached.

The brothers were troubled as they heard the racket in the chimneys and the furious fling of the wind at the window. The excitement of the early evening was dead. The pain of parting, and the desolation of their lot weighed heavy on them. James almost resolved to cast away every consideration that would detain him and accompany his brother into exile, but George would not hear of it; James must stay and help the rest to bear the burden of their hard life, and to keep burning in their hearts the hope of freedom, and of the triumph of "The Cause." As they talked in low tones and with sad intervals, there came with the wind the sound of rain—fierce rain. How then were the fugitives to get "clear off"? Neither the sands nor the rocks could be the *rendezvous*—unless the rain should lay the wind. But the wind still raged and drove the bitter rain like storm-spray among the wretched houses and over the insecure roofs of Ilkastane, as if it were charged to find out and work vengeance on the lurking Chartists.

Through all this wild racket one woman under a roof not far off was not only wakeful, but up and dressed, she concerning whom George Hutcheon and Fergus O'Rhea had had words. Kitty McCree—"bonny Kitty"—had sat in the draughty garret which was her bedroom, waiting—

waiting for how many hours ?—for the message from Fergus O'Rhea which came not. High-strung with hope she had early packed her bag and seen that her small store of money was safe; and then she had sat down to wait, with what patience she was mistress of, the promised word or sign. When bed-time came she dared not move about for fear of disturbing her parents below. So she sat, hour after hour, growing sick with wonder, alarm, and dread, her mind becoming more and more fixed, to the verge of madness, on the slow passage of the minutes and the increasing cold. When the wind burst upon the roof and whistled through its tiles into the room, her painful attention was relieved a little, only, however, to be made more acute and unendurable by the thought that her lover's signal might be lost in the clamour. When the first gust of rain rattled on her sky-light window she thought it must be a handful of gravel thrown by him. She dashed to the window and opened it, only to be well-nigh choked with the storm, and to feel as if her room would be turned inside out. She managed to close the window, but she could not now contain her distress. Why—oh, why!—did he not come to her? He knew the way, alas! too well! and she had a claim on him, as on a husband! Yet he did not come!—he gave no sign! The strain of cold, anxiety, dread, shame and helplessness was too great, and she was about to throw herself on her bed in utter despair, when an agony of pain seized her. The horror of its meaning held her rigid a moment, and almost struck her heart still, and then it flung her on the floor, crying, “Oh, mither! mither!” Her mother, wakeful below, heard the fall and the cry. She rose from her bed and went to her daughter . . . and by-and-by, through the whoop, and howl, and hiss of the storm, there sounded the faint cry of an infant inhaling for the first time the breath of life.

. . . . .

The coldest hour of the night had long passed when the outer door of the weaving-shop creaked open. Two men came out and the door was pulled to. The taller was James Hutcheon. His brother lingered behind while he put his

head out into the loan, and looked up and down ; there was nothing stirring but the wind. The two passed quickly forth and down the loan, at the end of which two others came from a doorway and joined them. They were Steven and O'Rhea. They all four without a word turned to the right along the side of the burn, which babbled and murmured, careless of the wind.

It was a cold night, but the struggle with the storm warmed the fugitives. The wind filled every worn sleeve, every pocket and fold about the toiling, choking men. It seized every thread and rag, and made whips of them to scourge their owners. Sometimes it swooped down upon them and brought them to a dead halt, or forced them against a wall, as if it had resolved when it had rifled them and found out their musty poverty to sweep them from its path. It rushed over their hands, and past their faces in a cold, cruel stream. It buffeted them on cheek and chest, and scorned every hair of their beards as if it would say, "Dross and scum of the earth! Away, away! Back! And be swept to your doom by the besom of the law!"

The four men struggled on in silence, clear of the remotest suburb of the city, till they came to the steep river-bank. James Hutcheon went down by himself out of sight.

"By my trogs," said Steven, resting by a wall, "this has been a terrifu' road, fightin' the wind! When we cross the watter, I suppose it'll be at our back."

Hutcheon returned with another man (in whom Kirsty Kyle would have recognised Cadger Jock), led by whom they went down crunching among the pebbles and the gravel to the river-brink, and into a broad salmon-fishing boat. The stream was swift, and their course slanted to the opposite shore; which being attained, they climbed the bank and went flying before the wind, by tracks and dykes, till the hollow roar of the sea among the rocks sounded through the rush of the wind among the stunted trees, the gorse and stones through which they were driven. It was a cruel, desolate shore, piled and strewn with huge granite boulders, relics of the battles fought by Titans when the world was

young. Far out to the north at the end of the Ness, the lighthouse held a steady, mellow light aloft to warn the mariner off. From boulder to boulder, sliding and slipping, by leaps and turns, the four fugitives flitted like scared nightbirds. A sheltered cove was reached, where the foot sank soft in pungent-smelling sea-weed, and where the waves glided in like oil. A coasting barque had engaged to put a boat in here; but as yet there was neither boat nor barque to be seen. Surely they were not betrayed. And yet it was past the hour agreed upon!

But after a little, a ship was seen wearing round the Ness under double-reefed topsails—surely the expected barque. They watched her round and well into view. She seemed sailing on to the south without pause, without thought of those waiting for her in the cove.

“Show a flare,” suggested O’Rhea.

But how could fire or flare be made without either match or dry wood? There were many bleached shreds of wood about, but what had not been soaked by the tide had been drenched with the rain. What was to be done? The barque was wearing past.

“We swore,” said James Hutcheon, rapidly stripping himself of coat and waistcoat, “that we would neither shirt nor shave till ‘The Cause’ was won. We may break that now. I winna shave, but I’ll shirt the day!”

So saying he drew off his shirt, while O’Rhea, seeing what he would be at, found a proper stone, and with his pocket-knife, while the others stood round with their coats extended, struck and struck again to produce a spark. At last it was done, the spark was blown upon, and the shirt blazed fiercely up. Presently there was an answering flare from the stern of the ship, and a boat was seen putting off, and soon the splash of the oars was heard in the water of the cove. A little while and there was the strong lingering grip of brown, muscular hands. O’Rhea, who had had so many words of encouragement to utter in the early evening, had not one now.

“Jamie, my brother,” said George Hutcheon, “stick to the Cause!”

"Dinna doubt that, Geordie," answered James. "And let me hear from ye."

"Good-bye," said Steven, with a cheerful huskiness of voice. "So long to ye baith."

"See," said Hutcheon, as they pushed out the boat from among the sea-weed, "there's the day lookin' up." He pointed to the grey watery dawn just beginning. "There's luck in that for us a'!"

The boat was rowed away, and he and Steven turned homeward with full, sad hearts. They pulled their bonnets over their brows, and Hutcheon buttoned his coat well up on his shirtless throat.

Thus—appropriately, *in wind*, careless observers said then and would say still—thus ended for Ilkastane the closing episode of the Chartist Rising of '48. Yet neither the effects of the wind nor of the Rising ceased with that night. The wind was moved by an eternal necessity to blow the wild, free breath it brought from sea and mountain and moor into valleys of Tophet and over Fields of Aceldama, where the air had become heated and noxious and full of oppression; it blew and sowed there the fresh seeds of Nature it brought on its wings. So this Chartism blew and stirred the oppressed hearts of men. It blew and it passed—but it left fructifying seed, of good and of evil, even in such a hard, wayside spot as Ilkastane.

END OF THE PROLOGUE.



## THE STORY.

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“Not only we, the latest seed of Time,  
New men, that in the flying of a wheel  
Cry down the past,—not only we, that prate  
Of rights and wrongs, have loved the people well.”

TENNYSON: *Godiva*.

### CHAPTER I.

#### LEPINE AND SON.

So it came to pass that these two formidable Chartists, George Hutcheon and Fergus O'Rhea, were not caught by the agents of the Law. The warrant remained out against them, and the Fiscal still kept a suspicious eye on Ilkastane and occasionally instructed one or two of his men in blue to give a special “look in” here and there, and to ask the postman about the correspondence of the outlawed Hutcheon's brother. But nothing happened, nothing was found—not even a letter addressed to James Hutcheon—to stir afresh the waning interest in the designs and movements of the pestilent Chartists. And thus came the snow and the New Year, 1849 (what an old year it seems to us now!), bringing much solemn and festive distraction in the city of Inverdoon, and much misery and want in the hamlet of Ilkastane; for when griping hunger within adds its pains and chills to those of pinching cold without, then is there misery indeed. Of the condition of Ilkastane, Inverdoon heard very little, and that little only confirmed its excellent citizens in their belief that the weaving suburb was given over to perdition because of its wild, wicked Chartism and its persistent neglect of the Sabbath and of “the means of grace.”

With the Spring came rumours of unrest and revolution which attracted the eyes of the country (using the word in a strictly parliamentary sense) to the Continent, with an anxious side glance to see what effect the news would have on the prostrate Chartists. In Ilkastane, at least, it had no effect at all, for its weavers were more and more engrossed with the invasion and conquest of their own rights and privileges. The great twin Powers of Steam and Iron, after one of two tentative efforts, had resolutely advanced and settled themselves in field and baugh, to belch over the village their foul smoke, and hot, noxious vapours, with their clanking and whirring machines to deride its slow, wooden hand-loom, and slowly but surely to draw the work from its hands and the pith from its life. There is in Nature, we are told, a law which is known as "The Survival of the Fittest"; in Commerce there is a similar law—The Survival of the Cheapest. By that law the industry on which Ilkastane prided itself was doomed to extinction. For a long time the craft of weaving by hand-loom had been sinking into a poverty-stricken occupation; for some years it had been confined in Ilkastane to one fabric—that known to ladies as Wincey. For years the unwearying, clattering power-loom of the mills had been reeling off a thousand yards of all qualities of linen for one of any sort produced by the careful hand of the weaver; but the hand-loom, until recently, had had a monopoly of Wincey manufacture. Then fashion took it into its head to make women's petticoats and winter dresses of that combination of cotton and wool, which had at its best—when made in the hand-loom—the substance and softness of cloth. And then intervened the agents for the power-loom and undertook to produce the stuff at half the price. "Ah," said the weavers, "but not half so good." "We shall see," said the masters of the power-loom.

Thus the struggle began between the cunning hand of the weaver and the insensate might of imprisoned steam. And thus the year 1849 passed away, and brought another winter of misery and another new year, which again passed in like manner. Strange things had been doing in that

time on the Continent (for instance, a Second Empire had got itself established in France), which had somewhat disturbed even the equanimity of England; but Ilkastane thought little and spoke little of any of them. It was concerned that its work and its wages were getting less and less. Then came the year 1851, with its monster show in Hyde Park of the industries of all nations, and its vast concourse of people of all nations—people with a big “P” and people with a small. This was lauded as the inauguration of the universal reign of Peace and Good Will among men, and Ilkastane, like many another place, was moved to hope a better day was dawning; but this blaze of promise was only the blaze of fireworks, which left things by-and-by looking darker than ever. So passed for Ilkastane the years ’52 and ’53, with their mad rush from country and town to the newly-discovered gold fields of Australia. Then came the war with Russia, which stirred our country to its depths, and so opened the year ’56, in the April of which peace was declared, and the heart of the country rejoiced. But the heart of Ilkastane was sad, and thus the necessities of our story take us again to the weaving suburb.

Near to Ilkastane on the westward, about five minutes’ walk up the lane called Burnside, was an old manor-house, known to natives as Corbie Ha’, but styled by its present possessor, Bailie Lepine, the *Château Rouen*. A bailie with a French name and possessing a “château” requires some explanation. Forty years before the beginning of this story there had been brought as prisoner of war, to Penycuik, near Edinburgh, a bulky, shrewd Frenchman of Lille, named Edmond Lepine. There he languished, with other Frenchmen, on gruel and red herrings, earning a little tobacco-money by making toy *sabots* and other things for his jailors and the people who came to stare at the prisoners. To the canny, solid Fleming his Scotch jailors (who belonged to a corps of militia) took rather kindly; they found him liker themselves than the other prisoners. When peace was proclaimed, shrewd Edmond Lepine, perceiving that there was a better chance of making a living among his British captors than in his own disorganised country, ac-

cepted the invitation of Saunders M'Cree (who had been one of his jailors and intimates) to go north with him. So he came to Inverdoon. He had been brought up as a weaver of tapestry, but he could turn his hand to any kind of weaving. He found employment in a small carpet factory, and speedily found favour with his master by his industry and cleverness, saved money, became partner in the business, married his master's only child (as such lucky rascals always do), and finally inherited all his master's property. Then he installed himself in his late master's home, and changed its name. Lepine was proud of his "château"; and, indeed, with its thick granite walls, its narrow, sombre windows, and its turret round which the rooks swung and cawed on the old firs, it had something of a castellate look. A tradition lingered in local histories that it was the remains of a monastery. Lepine prospered, and by-and-by he was elected a Bailie of Inverdoon, and after that Provost for the year. Then it was that he caused a bell to be hung in the turret to announce to the rooks and the people of Ilkastane (who showed him less respect than he would have liked) when *Monsieur le Prévôt* dined.

On a dark, cold night in the beginning of March, 1856, the bell clanged out as it had done nightly for years, in cold and wet, in storm and calm, in sunshine and moonlight, when the leaves were on the trees and when they had not a leaf to cover their nakedness—it clanged out and was acknowledged by a sleepy, irregular caw from the rooks in the treetops, as who should say, "There it goes again; it's seven o'clock." The last vibration of the bell had scarcely throbbed out of the air when Bailie Lepine sat down at the head of the dining table, tucked his napkin into his waistcoat, and with his head motioned to the large, depressed-looking serving-man in rusty black to remove the cover of the soup.

"Jaques, where is that boy? Is it that he cannot hear the bell? The bell is loud enough! It is three minute past seven, and the soup it becomes cold!"

This and more he muttered, glancing the while at the clock on his right on the mantel-piece, and stirring about

the soup preparatory to ladling it out. A handsome young man of two or three-and-twenty entered, handsomely dressed, and leisurely took his seat.

"What-a-devil have keep you, George?" exclaimed George's father, at once serving the soup. "I sit me down always when the bell ring, and another time I begin without you."

"I wasn't quite ready, father," said the young man, stroking the young growth on his lip.

"What, you was shaving again—*hein*?" A smile of watery melancholy for an instant altered the expression of the depressed serving-man. "Ah," said the Bailie, noting it, "what you think, Jaques? He shave, I believe, twice, two times, a day to make come the beard! *Sacrebleu*! He will be glad one day as me to have no beard," and he put his hand to his square rough jaw.

"Jaques knows," said the young man, "that I don't shave. I shall never shave."

"And for what not, sir?" asked the Bailie. "All gentlemen shave them except a little."

"Perhaps they do, father; but I think a gentleman should consider what suits him. It's all very well for you to shave; you have the jaw of a Roman Emperor or a French King, and you look imposing with it bare. Me, I have a lanky Scotch jaw——"

"Your late mother gave you that, poor woman," said the Bailie.

"And, I think, it will look best covered, if Nature will be so good as send me hair enough."

"Ah, she will, if you encourage her with the razor. But I like not to see hair on the face, me. Why eat you not plenty food enough? That would cover over your jaw more better as hair. *Hein*, Jaques?"

"*Oui, m'sieu*?" said Jaques absently.

"*Parbleu*! When I was young I was hungry for the meals all and everyone. Ah, hungry before and hungry after."

"You were hungry, I reckon, when you were at Penycuik, father—and thin, too. You didn't show such a fine jaw then—and you didn't shave, did you?"

"Ah, boy, speak not of it—speak not. *Non de noms!* Ah, *mais*, but that was the time of times! Ah, *pfui!* Pass the wine, boy! Ah, well, this new Empire, perhaps, is peace and good for business, but that!—it was fight, fight, fight ever and always. The devil he was in all and everyone then. Me—they took me, though I was not for war or politic, but for business!"

They continued dinner for some time in silence. Then the Bailie resumed.

"*Apropos* of France, George, a despatch have come from Courvoisier of Lille, that he like not the Wincey what we send. It is the same thing what Watt of Glasgow wrote—'The Wincey want substance.' Now that will not do for me at all. I wish to see business come, not go."

"It seems, father, that what the weavers say is true. The steam-loom will never do the fine, firm work of the hand-loom."

"It must, and it shall, me I tell you. And you sit there and say it to me quietly, as if, no! it do not matter to you the least thing in the world! Why take you not the interest in the business?"

"I do, father. I take all the interest I can," said George, looking at his fingers.

"Interest you can! It is necessary that you make yourself interest. Business is always like a girl, sir. If you do not attend, if you do not think much, very much, everything of her, she will go away to another. Now, attend you. It is time you have sow what they say your wild oat-meal and sit you to business! Our mill—I say '*our*,' because it is for you after me—our mill must make the Wincey good and to please the people what buy, but the time we find out how I have thought of something. The weavers of Ilkastane they do nothing almost, eh? Well, we offer them as much work as ever they can, but cheap—much more cheap than they have done. We will lose much in all case, because—what you think?—we will send out their pieces the same thing as our own, and we will get orders, full orders, which we will execute in our mill when the looms have been made to work more firm."

"But suppose, father, the looms in our mill won't work firmer?"

"Ah, *va-t'en!* go away. You are Scotch. You have only 'suppose' and 'if' and 'but.' But now after dinner I wish you go and bring Hew Tamson here. It is necessary we begin at once."

"All right, father," answered George.

Hew Tamson was one of the very few Ilkastane weavers who had had astuteness enough to see that the hand-loom was doomed, and suppleness enough at once to alter the tenor of his life. He had taken service under steam. When Bailie Lepine had built the Hargate mill and filled it with power-looms, with the unconcealed purpose of making all the Wincey he could get orders for, Tamson, dry and smooth, had gone and offered himself as "tenter" or overseer. He was a good workman, and a hard master, and had served the Bailie well, especially in getting girls from Ilkastane to "mind" the looms—girls who had some knowledge of weaving.

It was with an alacrity rather surprising that George, directly dinner was over, pushed his chair back, gave a glance in the glass to see that his hair and his necktie were in order, and said he was "going for" Tamson. How his father approved of that quick response to his appeal that he should put more interest into his work! How much more would he have approved if he had seen the young man striding along the Burnside as with seven-leagued boots, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left, except when it was necessary that he should, to ascend the Ilkastane loan and to enter Tamson's door! The loan was dark, and there was scarce a sound of life to be heard, except that of the boys playing hide-and-seek up and down the closes. As he passed the end of Hutcheon's close there was, too, the sound of a solitary loom; that seemed to promise well for his father's scheme. He rapped and rapped again on Tamson's door, and a leisurely foot came grinding over the sanded flags of the passage (for Tamson was wealthy enough to have a "but" and a "ben"), and the latch was lifted, and the heavy door

opened with a scraping on the flags sufficient to set the teeth on edge.

"Winna ye come in by?" asked Tamson's wife when he inquired for Tamson.

He thanked her, but said he could not enter; he had somewhere else to go. Would she tell her husband to step round to Corbie Ha'? His father particularly wished to speak to him.

"Eh, guidstakes," exclaimed the woman, who had been peering and listening with much attention, "it's Maister George! Eh, come in, man, come in. Hew'll be glad to see ye."

He thanked her again, repeated his message and went his way. The door did not even make a pretense of closing behind him, nor did Tamson's wife pretend to go at once to deliver the message; she stepped out with her arms akimbo and watched the elegant figure of the young man disappear up the loan into the darkness. Then she closed the door, went within to her husband and gave him the message, adding—"He said he had somewhaur other to gang. He's gane up the loan; wha can there be that way?" Tamson, who was as curious and as much of a gossip as his wife, speculated on the matter with her for some moments and then prepared to go to the Bailie's.

"An he had gane *doon* the loan," said Tamson in conclusion, "without waitin' for me, I mith ha' guessed he was aff to do a bit courtin'."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TRYST IN THE HAUGH.

As George Lepine marched up the loan, the dense darkness of cloud began to thin, and break, and disperse. The thick pall of vapours that covered the sky did not so much



seem to drift away, as to lift and melt and disappear in the air, till the growing moon showed tilted in the south, and shed her chaste and romantic light on all the world—on poor, sordid Ilkastane as on rich and comfortable Inverdoon. When cloud obscured the sky the lurid glow of Inverdoon shone high enough to be reflected even over Ilkastane, but when the moon came forth, the glow of the city was suppressed, and the benign light of heaven was over all and in all, touching all to strange and gentle loveliness.

When George Lepine reached the top of the loan, he was in one of the ways that led to Inverdoon. He turned his face toward the city, and buttoned up his overcoat, for the wind met him full from the east. The air was crisp and bracing, and the young man marched briskly along, while the bright and crescent moon cheerily kept him company on the right. His step was elastic and buoyant—a little too buoyant one might say; for, while he put his toe very distinctly and firmly to the ground first, his heel rose very notably with every step—which (say they who are cunning in tokens of character) signifies that he who walks so is both obstinate and impulsive, and will certainly have ups and downs of feeling and fortune. The way was lonely, but presently George became aware that he had other company than the moon. He heard behind him a step that endeavoured to measure itself by his. It occasionally broke out of its measure, however, into an undignified trot. Glancing over his shoulder, without slackening his pace, he saw a little boy in a kilt and a Glengarry cap, and he was amused to note that the boy was trying hard to imitate his way of walking, even to the spring of the heel. He stopped suddenly and turned, and the boy stopped too, a little way off, and looked as if inclined to run away.

"Are you going into the town?" asked George.

"Na," said the boy, "I'm just out to meet the Maister."

"But you're going this way," said George, "and you'd better keep me company."

So the boy came near, and they walked on side by side, the boy then attempting no other than his natural pace.

"And what's your name?" asked George.

"Hamish M'Cree," answered the boy.

"M'Cree!" said George, looking down sharply at him.

"Oh, you're Hamish?"

"Ay," said the boy; "wha did ye think I was?"

"Oh," said George, with a laugh, "I thought you were Rob Roy, or, at least, MacTavish of Tavish."

"Na," said the boy seriously, "I'm no that."

"Wouldn't you like to be?"

"What?"

"Rob Roy, or MacTavish of Tavish?"

"I'd like fine," answered the boy with a touch of shyness, "to be Rob Roy; I dinna ken the other ane."

"Oh!" exclaimed George, "you know Rob Roy? You've read about him, I suppose. And you go to school?"

"Ay," said the boy, "I gang to the school, and I learn g'ography and gremmar."

"You're far advanced," said George; "and how old are ye, Hamish?"

"I'm seven gaun acht." (By which he meant he was between seven and eight.)

"Dear me," said the young man, "I'd have thought you were ten or twelve. You're big for your age."

"They a' say that," murmured Hamish. "But I canna help it."

"Why," asked the young man, "should you want to help it? You're big, but I think you're clever, too."

"Ay," said Hamish, with a twinkle, "but folk might ha' thought me cleverer if I had been sma'er."

George Lepine laughed a loud, hearty laugh, and Hamish M'Cree looked at him and laughed also.

"You're the queerest boy I ever met," said George. "I hope we may become better acquainted. Now I must leave you."

The road lay past the end of a little dell (called "The Hoodie's Haugh"), into which a path dipped, and on the farther side of which lay the Hargate Mill of the Lepines.

"Are ye gaun to the mill?" asked Hamish.

"You know me, then?" said George.

"Ay," said the boy, "I ken ye fine. Ye're young Maister

Lepine. The folk a' say Lippen, but my Aunt Elsie learned me how to say't."

"Oh," exclaimed George, "your Aunt Elsie. Well, good-night, my lad;" and he turned to descend the path into the Haugh.

"I say," exclaimed Hamish hurriedly; "ha'e ye mony books to read?"

"Oh, yes; a good many. Why?"

"Will ye lend me ane? I'll tak' care o't."

"To be sure, I will. Come on Sunday and see me, and I'll give you a book."

And he ran down the path into the dell, while the boy continued along the road. But it was not to the mill he was bound. In a nook of the Haugh was a dried-up fountain which had once been called a "Holy Well." It now looked, with the spout wrenched from the leopard's head of iron set in the low, moss-covered wall, with the parched and gaping throat exposed, and with the accumulation of rubbish and the growth of weeds, as respectable a ruin as many people go hundreds of miles to see. Near this ruin stood in the full moonlight a female figure that was of too warm and human a substance to be the lingering spirit of the well. She had a shawl wrapped about her and drawn over her head as a hood. George Lepine went briskly to her, and took her in his arms.

"I must look at your dear, bonny face, Elsie!" said he, putting back the shawl from her head.

"Dinna be sae silly, George," said she gently.

"I must be silly about you, Elsie," said he; "you make me silly."

"That's an ill word to use, George, but I sair misdoubt me that it's true. I dinna want ye to be silly, though I dinna ken what to do or say to mak' ye sensible."

"You're sensible enough for us both, Elsie," said the young man, taking her head between his hands and looking into her eyes. "You're adorable!"

And, indeed, she might well have excited the enthusiasm of any young man who had not the blood of a mere fish in his veins. She was of a voluptuous type of beauty rare

among Scotch women of any rank. She looked more of an Irish than a Scottish maiden. She was tall and graceful, and withal well-rounded. Her eyes were richly shaded, and were of a wonderful deep blue; but her hair was brown—a warm wavy brown. Her white forehead was low but broad, her cheek smooth and rosy, her chin full and seductively rounded, and her mouth had a firm, an almost child-like pout of ripe innocence, her lips being such full, rich buds as youthful poets have often raved about but have seldom seen. Such was Elsie M'Cree—a perfect marvel of warm beauty in her lowly station and in a hard, cold country—and especially a marvel as the daughter of Saunders M'Cree and his wife Eppie.

George Lepine led Elsie to their usual haunt in this trysting place—a gnarled thorn-tree, which stretched out a strong arm against the bank as a commodious seat for lovers.

“Who do you think, Elsie,” he asked, when they had sat down together, “who do you think I had for company on my way here?”

“I canna say, George.”

“A friend and relation of yours, Elsie.”

“A frien'? Wha can ye mean?”

“Hamish—the laddie you've told me about. He's a droll little man.”

“Ay,” said Elsie, “he's very auld-farrant.” (That is, “old-fashioned.”)

“He asked if I would lend him a book, and I bade him come and see me on Sunday.”

“You're very kind, George,” said Elsie, putting her hand in his.

“But the oddest thing to me,” continued George, “was to hear him call you Aunt Elsie.”

“I am his aunt,” returned Elsie simply; “his mither's my sister, ye ken. Puir thing! I've never told ye, George. She's no right in her head. She doesna ken him well as her ain son, and he doesna ken her as his mither. He kens neither faither nor mither, puir loon! We're an unlucky family!” and she withdrew her hand and wiped her eyes.

"Tell me about it," said George, taking her hand again and tenderly kissing it.

"It's sair and sad, George," said she. "I was a wee bit lassie, but I mind a' about it. It was when the Chaiertists were a' to the fore. My father was ane o' them, and my sister Kitty was amang them. She was a bonny lass, I believe."

"She was your sister, Elsie."

"Of course she was, George," said Elsie, in simple disregard of the delicate compliment. "And she was coorted by George Hutcheon, a clever young man that was thought a great deal o'. I fancy he didna mean ony wrang to her, but he had to hide for his life. The very night the laddie Hamish was born—an awfu' night o' storm it was!—he sailed awa' to foreign pairts, and Kitty's been daft ever sin-syne. He may be dead, or he may be living. Naebody has ever heard, no even his ain brither!"

"It is a sad story, Elsie."

"We're an unlucky family, George, and I sair misdoubt me what may come o' our acquaintance!"

"Oh, Elsie, don't say that! You don't think I would do you any harm!"

"I'm sure o' that, George. I'm sure ye wouldna want to break my heart, and I dinna think Kitty's sweet-heart wanted to break hers. It just comes about ye kenna how."

"I'd sooner break my own than yours, my dear, sweet Elsie!" And he drew her to him and kissed her so that for a moment or two she could not say a word. "Why are you so sad to-night, Elsie?" he asked.

"I've been thinking things over, George, and I'm no sure ava' that I'm doing what's right."

"I thought you loved me, Elsie?"

"I lo'e ye, George—yes, I lo'e ye! But I canna let ye spoil your life for me! Ye've your father to think o'. He wouldna like ye to marry me. I'm no a leddy."

"You're better than a lady, Elsie."

"Dinna haver, George. And just suppose your father would let ye marry me. I wouldna feel at hame; I couldna

bear to be looked down on. I'd hae a sair heart, and I'd sit me down and dee!"

"And who would or could look down on you, Elsie? Who is my father that he should look down on you? He came to this country a prisoner of war; and when he began in Ilkastane he was poorer than your father. He has been pushing and lucky, that's all. But now, Elsie, instead of thinking in that sad, humble way, why don't you do what I asked you to do a while ago? Leave the mill, it's not fit for such as you, and go and stay with my old governess at Lochhead and be her pupil. I'll make up to your parents for the loss of your wages."

"Ye're unco kind, George, but I dinna think it would be right for me to leave my ain folk."

"You'd have to leave your ain folk, Elsie, if you married me. Come, let me persuade you. I can arrange it at once."

And he set about his persuasion with such arguments as lovers have used since the beginning of time. He drew her close to him, and he took a ring from his own finger and pressed it upon hers to bind her closer still.

They were thus occupied with sweet converse when the sound of voices interrupted them, and from their retreat they saw descending the side of the dell next the town two tall men and a boy. George Lepine recognised the boy without difficulty, in the moonlight, as Hamish M'Cree.

"Ane o' them is the Maister," whispered Elsie, "the ane in the broad bonnet; I dinna ken the other."

"Hamish," said George, "told me he was going to meet the Maister. Why do you both call him the Maister?"

"Ow," answered Elsie, "I dinna weel ken. A'boddy calls him the Maister, or Maister Hutcheon—he's the brither o' the young man I told ye o', that was sweetheart years ago to my sister Kitty."

They were silent, Maister Hutcheon was speaking. He and his companions had stopped by the ruined well.

"Ye mind the place?" said he. "It was here the folk often cam' to find nettles to mak' broth in that terrible

year, the year ye went awa' ; and here we met and here we mingled in the daft business that sent ye awa'."

"There was no mill standing there then?" queried the other, in a good English accent.

"No, man; there was no mill there then, and the Haugh wasna made an ash-pit o', and the burn wasna dirty, and the well wasna dry. The braw mill and a' the braw things that come o't are the result o' a pretty way we've got in this country; we kick out our ain folk at the back door, man"—and he clapped his hand firmly on his companion's broad shoulder—"and stretch out our arms to welcome a' kinds o' foreign trash in at the front!"

"By G—d, you're right, Hutcheon!" said the other.

"Man," continued Hutcheon, "it mak's your heart sair to see your own folk so hadden down—wantin' both bit and sup—and this bailie creature! If I had my way I'd pull that mill down till not one stone was standing on another, and I'd hang the miller to that tree!"

"Ye speak out better than ye did eight years ago," said the other.

"I'm changed, man; I'm changed," said Hutcheon. "I've been thinkin' out things a' my lone."

He turned and strode away, and the man and the boy went with him.

"The Maister's a fine-looking man," said George, "but he's terribly excited. He wouldn't mind hanging me, too, I suppose, though I am half a Scotsman."

"Ow," said Elsie, "he'd hang naebody. He's the kindest man i' the world, but he gets awfu' angry when he sees the folk sae poor."

"Who's the other man, I wonder?" said George. "Do you think it might be his brother come back?"

Elsie said nothing, but she wondered, too.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE MASTER OF HUTCHEON.

HUTCHEON *was* excited; there is no doubt about it. That morning he had received a letter—a very short letter—bearing the Edinburgh post-mark. He was simply and curtly asked to meet a man who had travelled with his brother in foreign parts, and who would arrive in Inverdoon by such and such a train. That was all; there was neither address at the head of the letter, nor signature at the end. Hutcheon went, in the wild hope that the man he was asked to meet might be his brother, who would fear to write more openly, or to sign his name. He met, however, not his long-lost Geordie, but his companion in exile—O'Rhea. He led him home with him to Ilkastane, as we have seen—turning aside for a few minutes into the Hoodie Haugh—all with results which will develop themselves anon.

When they arrived in the Ilkastane loan, Hamish, very loath, was sent home to the M'Cree's to bed, and Hutcheon and his guest continued their way through the close to the long, low rooms over the weaving-shop where last we saw them.

"Who is the boy, Hutcheon?" asked O'Rhea.

"Kitty's," answered Hutcheon. "He was born the very night you and George went awa'."

O'Rhea said no more, but Hutcheon, had he looked in his companion's face, might have noted a change in it; the eyes seemed to grow larger, and the skin to grow greyer.

Arrived in the room which was workshop and sitting-room combined, Hutcheon lighted his two usual wax candles stuck in massive candlesticks (the candles and the candlesticks were the only loud notes of luxury about the place—all else was rude and simple), and his guest sat down and looked with meditative and reminiscent eyes around him.

"My G—d! Hutcheon!" said he, throwing up his head and permitting a ring of emotion in his voice. "How it all



comes back! Here you sat with M'Cree and Steven, and there I sat with George! And we talked——! My G—d!”

Hutcheon looked at O'Rhea, and remarked more particularly than he had yet done the changes that had come to pass upon him. He was thin and seemed ill; and his red beard was sprinkled copiously with grey, as was also the hair of his head, which was become thinner on the crown, though where it flourished it stuck up as obstinately as ever. His hand shook so that Hutcheon asked him if he felt ill or cold.

“It's ague, Hutcheon—ague!” he answered. “I'm dying, my boy—dying! And I've come here to find some dog-hole to die in, near somebody I know.”

“Dinna clack havers, man. Ye'll rest ye here, make yourself at hame, and ye'll soon be a' right, and live mony a year yet.”

“No, Hutcheon,” said O'Rhea; “I'll not impose upon you to that extent. I'll accept your hospitality for a day or two, and thank you—but no more, my boy—I mean I'll accept no more. I am not quite destitute. You see I've no luggage——”

“I see ye havena; but whatever I have is at your service—sarks and stockings, and what ye will.”

“Thank you again. But I've brought home a little bit of money, and when I can look round I'll provide myself with what I need; a shanty for myself—for I cannot live long with any mortal creature, however much I may like the person—and a dud or two. So, now that's settled, let's talk of other things.”

“We must ha'e supper first,” said Hutcheon.

He had clearly laid in extra provision for his expected guest. He had soon spread his table amply from the contents of his cupboard—smoked mutton (an inland delicacy), white bread, and oat-cakes and butter. There was no liquid of any kind on the table; Hutcheon's fashion (like that of many of those days) was to finish eating and then to drink. So when the eating was done that night, he put the kettle on and brought forth a grey-beard of whisky to make toddy.

When the toddy was made, Hutcheon sat down to help his guest to drink it and to talk.

On the way home from Inverdoon they had spoken of George, and in the desultory conversation over food they had resumed the subject. In brief, what news O'Rhea had to give came to this: When they arrived in London, seven and a-half years before, they sought at once for a ship sailing to Australia. Little more than a year of Australia was enough for them, when they parted—George to seek his fortune in India, and O'Rhea to find a new El Dorado. They had never met again, and, regarding his own adventures since their parting, O'Rhea was very close.

"I'm disappointed," said Hutcheon, when they settled down to their toddy, "not to ha'e heard more o' George."

"I can't tell you more," said O'Rhea, "because I don't know more. But George is canny; don't despond about him. He'll turn up smiling when you least expect it, just like me; only he'll not come back a miserable prodigal like me. He'll appear with sandal-wood boxes stuffed with Cashmere shawls, and with bags of Golconda diamonds and John Company rupees, for he's one of the lucky rascals that can shake the pagoda tree."

Hutcheon did not understand his allusions, but he sat looking at him in unembarassed silence as if he did, and pulled his flowing moustachios.

"But come now," said O'Rhea, "let's talk about yourself, Hutcheon. You're changed, you say, and I see you are. But do you mean you've given up the Cause, that George left in your keeping?—the sacred Cause of Revolt?"

"The Cause, man," said Hutcheon, with emphasis, "so far as it means looking after and helping our own poor folk, I'll never gi'e up, but the Cause, so far as it concerns the ways and means o' Chartism, is an abomination to me now."

"By G—d, that is a change, Hutcheon!" said O'Rhea. "Let's hear how it came about;" and he leaned on the table, prepared to listen as with the liveliest interest.

"Ye ken," began Hutcheon, "that it was more Geordie

than me that was ta'en up wi' Chartism ; I went into't just because he was in it."

"I know," said O'Rhea, "you never came forward, not much. Fortunate for you that you didn't, or you'd have had to hide and run as we had."

"It was no fear that held me back," said Hutcheon, with a quick flush ; "ye ken that, I suppose. I didna like it ; it went somehow against my nature. I didna ken my own mind."

"You were old enough, I believe, Hutcheon ?"

"I was five-and-twenty ; but at that age, man, we northern folk are raw in body and mind. I couldna tell it to mysel' at that time, but I can now, that ye a' seemed to me either bellowing nowt\* or bleating sheep. We a' wanted something, and we a' roared for't, without system, and wi' no muckle chance o' gettin' it. And we didna get it. Now it has been boorne in on me that that's no the way to do onything. The most o' folk are made to be ruled and ordered. They're best off when they're ruled and ordered ; and they must be ruled and ordered if things are no to run a' through other."

"I suppose," said O'Rhea, considering Hutcheon keenly, "you've been reading some book."

"De'il a book. I've just thought it out, tramping ower hill and haugh."

"Hutcheon," said the other, leaning back in his chair, "you're just a d—d aristocrat !"

"I carena what name you or any others ca' me," said Hutcheon, rising and standing with his back to the fire, and looking down on O'Rhea, "but I mean to manage my own folk here in Ilkastane. God has put me over them, and I must rule them for their good, and manage for them ! It's no a big dependency, but it's big enough for me."

O'Rhea looked up in surprise at the fervour of these words, and was struck strangely with the air of dignity and authority that invested Hutcheon.

"Ah, yes," said he with a tone of conviction that had

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\* Cattle.

the faintest twang of mockery about it, "to be sure! I forgot."

What O'Rhea forgot was why Hutcheon was commonly called "The Maister" in Ilkastane. As he tugged meditatively at his beard and looked up at Hutcheon he recalled the whole story, which was to the following effect:—Late in last century, after the rigorous suppression of the Jacobites, it was no uncommon thing to find the chieftains of small Highland clans, or the heads of small feudal houses who had been attainted, performing menial offices in the Scottish towns. Being ignorant of handicrafts, while utterly impoverished and powerless, they sank and disappeared among the poorest of the people, the one thing that, for some time, especially distinguished them from those among whom they dwelt, being the pride of birth, which cropped out on occasion. (It was just such a subversal of feudalism and aristocracy as has recently taken effect in far Japan.) Among the gallant gentlemen of the north who suffered thus from his adherence to the cause of the Stuarts in 1745, was the Master of Hutcheon, the eldest son of the old lord or baron of that ilk. When "proud Cumberland" trampled on the defeated of Culloden, the Master escaped home to the Gordon country, and skulked from hiding-place to hiding-place, protected by the Duke of Gordon, with whom he claimed kinship. He was attainted and outlawed; and he finally settled down with a client of his house in the lonely hamlet of Ilkastane, which then consisted of some dozen cottages. His client was a weaver, and the Master, to hide his identity at first, and afterwards to earn a living, took up with weaving too.

He had a knowledge of wools, and he discovered he had some business faculty, so that anon he prospered as an employer of weavers, and invited some of his followers to join him with their families. Thus Ilkastane grew, and thus the owner of most of the looms and employer of most of the folk was generally called "The Maister"—though it was only when all danger was over that the name of Hutcheon was openly revived. Thus it came to pass, too, that the Master, and his son after him, exercised in Ilkastane some-

thing of feudal authority. The son, however, let that lapse very much ; for to him the traditions of his house had become faint, and he had grown not unlike the average prosperous citizen. He added field to field and house to house, and he sought to educate his two sons, James and George, in all the learning of the towns. James, however, was rather like his grandfather. He cared not to sit over his books ; he loved the open air, and he played truant to such purpose that he knew every tree and bush, and every wrinkle on the face of Nature, for miles round Ilkastane, while little of the lore of school had entered his mind. His younger brother George, however, was of a slighter build and a more studious turn. He stuck to his books, and went to the University, and thence to a theological school to study for orders in the Scottish Episcopal Church (the family, like most of the Jacobite gentry, had been Episcopalian for generations), when the Chartist movement came, and things fell out as I have described in the Prologue.

So O'Rhea stroked his beard and regarded his host with a new feeling. He had been wont to think Hutcheon a man of no account ; but now he saw him stand as the representative of romance and misfortune. O'Rhea was not without generosity, and he admitted to himself that, now he came really to look at Hutcheon, he appeared to him as sufficient an example of an aristocratic stock fallen from its high estate as he had ever seen and could ever imagine.

"Of course ! I see it all !" he exclaimed. "It's almost as plain as a pikestaff that you're the Master of Hutcheon. But you ought to wear a plumed bonnet, a steel breast-plate, and great high-folded jack-boots with spurs, and you ought to be ready to swing a cross-hilted sword from your side."

Hutcheon stroked his red beard and smiled. And, indeed, he did look notably handsome and antique—with his stalwart figure and his large humorous nose (of the slightly drooping shape characteristic of the early Stuart kings), his full, sweeping moustache, and his pointed Vandyke beard. It was probably more by instinct of what was becoming to himself than by any knowledge of fashions that

Hutcheon wore his beard in that style; but so he wore it, and he looked as gallant a cavalier as ever wore hauberk or wielded sword. Yet he was clad only in a coat of rough blue, and had to his hand only a stout stick, and a broad Scots bonnet.

"I've lost the shadow," said Hutcheon, "but I stick to the substance."

"You're right, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea. "By G—d, you're right. Your people—all people—need to be ruled, or else there is what we call anarchy, or the devil to pay! I've seen that this many a day, but it doesn't do to tell that to everyone. I'm as much of a feudalist and an aristocrat by nature as anybody. There *are* men that are born to rule other men; and, by G—d! the others had better submit to being ruled, or it will be worse for them."

"Weel," said Hutcheon, "I'm no sure that I just altogether mean that."

"Never mind," said O'Rhea, "It comes to the same thing. I'm at one with you. There's my hand on't. Now let's hear your plan, for I am sure there's something on your mind."

On that demand Hutcheon was somewhat at a loss. He stood and pulled his beard. He had no distinct plan of any sort ready. He had much of the true Celt—full of compassion and benevolence for his "folk," but with no clear, concrete design for the amelioration of their condition.

Now, O'Rhea was of another build. He had enough of Celt in his composition to make him romantic and impulsive; but yet he had sufficient Saxon to make him demand a settled and sufficient purpose behind the most eloquent talk. Hutcheon was putting himself forward before him as the head and chief of these people. What was his purpose? He demanded to see it.

They drank their toddy, and they talked, till the multitudinous clocks and watches around them marked the most frantically varying hours, and yet O'Rhea could not get at the Master of Hutcheon's deep design. That was because there was no depth to be got at.

But O'Rhea went to bed, knitting his brows, and thinking

that Hutcheon had become far more reserved and wily than a well-regulated friend ought to be.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BAILIE'S OFFER.

HEW TAMSON was a sharp man of business, who would only let the grass grow under his feet if he thought he could make hay of it at a future date. Having had his interview with Bailie Lepine (while George was communing with Elsie M'Cree), and having received his orders, he communicated that very night with some, and early the next morning with others, of the weavers; so that before noon they might have been seen by twos and threes, in thread-bare coats close-buttoned against the biting March wind, making their way to the Hargate Mill in the Hoodie's Haugh.

It was a strange and silent company that assembled in the large, bare "receiving-room" of the mill, with its long wide counter for the unfolding and measuring of finished "pieces" of weaving. The Ilkastane weavers sat on forms along the wall, or stood (the less shy of them) about the stove in the middle of the room, dazed and deafened with the sights and sounds of the mill. In passing in they had seen through innumerable windows the iron looms working furiously, the iron "lays" swinging without the touch of human hands, and weaving the work that should be theirs; and now they sat listening to the mad rush of machinery, the well-known birr of shuttles, the thump of lays beating the threads of weft into fabric, and the *cluck-click* of the caulms. Now and then, while they waited, a door opened for some one to pass through in hot haste, and then the sounds burst in upon them with redoubled force, and they got a glimpse of the ferocious iron monsters that were

devouring their work; and there deepened in them an inexpressible fear and hatred of it all.

It was notable that among the thirty or forty hand-loom weavers assembled not one was young; the young men had mostly gone away as soldiers or as sailors, while a few had found employment of one sort or another in Inverdoon. Of those who stood about the stove were our old acquaintances—M'Cree with his loud *bu-h-h*! little M'Kay with his asthmatic wheeze, and Steven the soldier with one eye. Loudoun sat on a form with Hay—a very tall, black-haired, large-boned, hollow-cheeked skeleton of a man. He was *the* sick man of Ilkastane, whose terribly consumptive look and great dark eyes appealed for the pity and got the commiseration of everyone.

"How's a' wi' ye the day?" asked Loudoun, in his ear.

"Awfu' bad," said Hay in painful gasps. "But I'll be better as the days get warmer. They're aye on the turn now; and I can tell by my feelings there's a change o' wind i' the air. D'ye think the Bailie'll gi'e me a wab?"

"Hoot, ay!" said Loudoun, "what for no, man? Ye're a fine hand at the wincey."

"I say, lads," said Hew Tamson, appearing behind the great counter from an inner door—his voice had a dry plausibility which was not meant to irritate, but which did—"dinna stan' about the stove; the Bailie doesna like it. It'll be mair respectfu' to be sitting down."

Tamson withdrew. The weavers looked at each other and murmured; they had not been used to that tone of address, and they had been wont to call no man "Master" but him of Hutcheon. Steven the one-eyed expressed the general feeling.

"Demme!" said he. "Wha's he? And the Bailie doesna like it! By the muckle Jingo! Will the Bailie gi'e me a penny mair the yerd for sittin' down to please him?"

"*Bu-h-h*!" roared M'Cree, clearing his impressive throat. "I kenned Bailie Lippen when he was a creeshie Frenchman—and so did ye, Loudoun——"

"Ay," said Loudoun, "weel that."



"And," continued the great M'Cree, "I'm no goin' to sit down to please *him* if I want to stand."

"Will ye sit doon, and haud your tongues?" said Tamson, showing a bare head and angry eye at the inner doorway.

"We're no tired, Hew," said Steven, shaking out a fiery wink from his seeing eye. "Demmit, Hew, we're no school-loons!"

"*Bu-h-h!*" said M'Cree. "It's jusht the principle. We stand up for principle."

"Dinna be an auld fool, Saunders!" said Tamson. "Here's the Bailie comin'."

M'Cree grew as red as a turkey-cock; but he sat down.

"Wi' their stuck-up aristocrats and bailies!" he muttered. "And syne they wonder that there's revolutions!"

Presently there came through the inner door, with his hat on, as if to go out, the Bailie. He came round the end of the counter, and passed down the middle of the room.

"Ah, yes," said he, stopping by the stove, looking round and speaking in a tone of recollection, "you men have come for the wincey to weave. Yes; well, there is one, two, three order of good wincey—eh, Tamson?—to make up very quick. You have not had work much all the winter; yes, I know. Very well, then, I make you very liberal offer and you will say quick if you take it; 'cause if you take it not, I go to some others. But," looking at his large gold watch, "*pfui!* I go; Tamson will tell you."

When the door closed on the Bailie all eyes turned on Tamson.

"Weel," said he, leaning both his arms on the counter, and looking at his fingers, "it's just this, boys. The Bailie has some fine orders in—lang orders—for next winter. The mill here canna fulfil them a' in good time, so he gi'es you the offer o' the best o' them. Ye'll ha'e constant wark for fine silver-grey and stripe at—but I'se get the paper o't."

He withdrew, and the weavers looked sideways at each other in silence. This was not the complete surrender that many of them had expected. Still, it meant steady work in the best kinds of wincey, at how much a yard? Sixpence

or sevenpence would be a very low rate for fine work. But let them hear. Tamson re-entered.

"Yes," said he, scanning a paper in his hands, "at fourpence a yard for stripe and threepence for fine silver-grey, and——"

"*Bu-h-h!*" cried M'Cree, rising. "*Threepence?—three-pence a yard for fine wincey? Ye maun be daft, Hew!*"

"It's the Bailie's offer," said Tamson. "I've naething to do wi't."

"We've never worked for less than fivpence," said Loudoun, timidly, "at the warst o' times."

They looked at each other in wonder, rage, and disappointment. Their feelings kindled at each other's angry looks, and they sputtered simultaneously into flame. They shook their heads, and murmured, and cried out "Na, na!"

"By Jingo," exclaimed Steven, scattering fiery winks, "for my coarse work, I s'pose it'll be naething a yerd, and find my ain batter!"\*

"Now, boys," said Tamson, with dry and smooth plausibility, "listen till a friendly word. It's no a bad offer ye've got. If ye dinna tak' it, others will, and ye'll gang on, just as ye ha'e been, wi' a wab here and a wab there—something ae week and naething the next. Ye'd better think it ower. I'll gi'e ye ten minutes;" and he took up his paper and went out.

The weavers again looked at each other in silence. They were all in the timid time of life, when body and mind are alike inelastic, when a man is conscious he can never hope to do other than he has been in the habit of doing. Young men might defy the Bailie and steam both; they could not. What, then, should they say to the Bailie's offer? The great M'Cree put himself forward at this juncture, and advised that they should hold out for sevenpence a yard for stripe and sixpence for silver-grey. It was all nonsense for Hew and the Bailie to say they could get the work done by others. They knew they could not, for it was notorious that there were none in the north could do so fine work as

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\* Batter is the dressing for the web.

the Ilkastane weavers. Nothing was said to his plea, and he took it upon him to advance and speak in behalf of all. The great man (who was blessed with a long body and short legs, arrayed in a long, snuff-coloured coat with brass buttons, and in ducks of no colour to speak of) marched up to the counter with a loud *Bu-h-h*, and leaning across, rapped with his stick at the inner door. Tamson reappeared, and M'Cree marched back into the middle of the room. He drew out his large turkey-red cotton handkerchief, blew his loud Roman nose, and spoke.

"Hew Tamson, I'm commissioned by my friends here ahint me to deliver oor answer to the Bailie's offer. Oor answer is, 'It winna do.' The weavers o' Ilkastane ha'e a reppytation to keep up, and they canna tak' what ye offer. It's a wonder the Bailie's no ashamed to offer't. Our terms is sevenpence for stripe and saxpence for fine grey."

"An' the devil tak' the hin'most!" said Steven, with a fiery wink aside.

"Man, Saunders, ye're daft!" said Tamson. "Ye're a' daft! Ye'll never get they prices again in this world."

The obvious sincerity of his surprise alarmed the weavers, and shook their resolution.

"By Jingo!" exclaimed Steven. "I think we maun consult the Maister first."

"I think that, too," said Loudoun.

It was Tamson's turn to be alarmed. Being an Ilkastane man, he knew well who was meant.

"I dinna see the necessity," said M'Cree, who could not brook being put aside.

"What do you want to ask onybody for?" said Tamson. "Arena ye free men?"

He threw open the door behind him, and showed a pile of webs, and heaps of trussed hanks of the finest wool weft in many colours—grey (in great abundance), brown, black, scarlet and gold. He knew something of his men. The mere sight of the fine materials was enough to tempt a good weaver to wish to set to work on any condition.

"Look at a' that bonny stuff!" he said.

The men were all shrewd enough to perceive that Tam-

son did not wish them to consult the Master, and therefore they were the more unanimously bent on doing it.

"Ay," said Loudoun, "bonny stuff, but we'll see the Maister first, and come back the morn."

"That's it," said Steven, with a rapid wink of decision, "we'll come back the morn. Come on, boys;" and he led the way out and was followed docilely by all but M'Cree, who obstinately "*Buh'd!*" for a second or two, wiped his perspiring bald head with his great red handkerchief and put on his hat.

"Ye dinna often come in to ha'e a crack wi' me noo, Saunders," said Tamson. "Look in the night if ye can spare the time."

"*Bu-h-h!* I may, Hew—I may;" and he marched out, muttering, "Donnert idiots!"

Within an hour the weavers had reassembled in the long weaving shop beneath Hutcheon's quarters. Steven ascended the stairs and requested Maister Hutcheon to come down: the folk had something to say to him.

Hutcheon went down, and was surprised to see some two-score men assembled about the looms. Stevens and Loudoun between them contrived to set forth the whole matter—how Tamson had requested them to go to the Hargate Mill, and what proposals had been made to them there.

"But," said Hutcheon, "what for did ye no tell me afore ye gaed to the Mill?"

"We didna want to disturb ye," said Steven. "We kenned ye had a frien' come to ye."

"I'd have gone with ye to the Bailie, and had no dealing with onybody but himsel'. Tamson! A cat's-paw! Tamson's a traitor! He's ane o' yoursel's just; he kens a' your ways, and a' your wants, and he shows the Bailie whaur to tak' advantage o' ye! If I were what I should be, Tamson would——! But that's neither here nor there. Ye want my advice. Ye'd better leave it altogether to me. If the worst come to the worst, ye may be sure, lads, that ye shanna want so long as I've onything, and I've a contrivance—a whamleerie thing getting ready—that'll gi'e ye the laugh o' Bailies and sic-like cattle. But, first, I'll see the

Bailie and mak' the best bargain I can for ye. Do ye agree to that ?”

“Surely—surely,” was heard on all sides.

“*Bu-h-h!*” said M'Cree, who had just come in. “I spak' for them, and insisted on saxpence for fine plain and sevenpence for stripe. We ought to get that at the very least to live decent.”

“We ought to get,” said Hutcheon, “twice as much as that, as we used to ha'e; but men like the Bailie that use iron machines to do their work ha'e no more bowels than their machines.”

“By George!” said an English voice. “Here's a fine assembly; and all honest, lean, and hungry Chartists, just as I left them seven years and more ago, with their asthmas and their consumptions, and their wives and their weans, I suppose!”

“By Jingo! It's O'Rhea!” exclaimed Steven.

It was indeed O'Rhea, and O'Rhea a little drunk.

“Now, now,” exclaimed Hutcheon, “this will not do. Ye're mistaken, Steven. This is my friend Mr. Spence, frae the south—ye understand—Mr. Spence, a quiet, douce body that wants to rest him in Ilkastane a while. Dinna forget that he's Mr. Spence, and that ye never saw him afore. Come on wi' me, Mr. Spence. Ye can mak' friends with our folk another day.”

So saying, Hutcheon led him out and up stairs.

“*Bu-h-h!*” said M'Cree, breaking the general silence. “O'Rhea back! What does that mean? Weel, the Maister, as ye a' ca' him, is a deeper ane than I thought.”

“By the muckle Jingo!” said Steven. “Ye forget, M'Cree, that the gentleman's name is Spence.”

That was just such a joke as the sad, dour weavers could laugh at, and they laughed.

“Let's gang down to Libby's and ha'e a mutchkin o' whisky,” said Steven.

The assembly broke up. Some half dozen went with the One-eyed to Libby's, M'Cree among them, fuming and spluttering and boiling over with hopes of the revival of Chartism. The great man saw himself once again the

sonorous and Roman-nosed demagogue, mouthing absurd and mischievous twaddle to listless crowds, and flinging about damp fireworks which everyone but himself knew were damp.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE MASTER AND THE BAILIE.

HUTCHEON (having begged O'Rhea, for his own sake, not to stir out, and having ensured that by turning the key upon him) set off straightway to find the Bailie. He had no anxiety about meeting the owner of Corbie Ha', proprietor of the Hargate Mill, and ex-Provost of Inverdoon, for he was going to ask nothing for himself, and he never thought of comparing himself with such a creature as a bailie, a man who was in sympathy with iron machines, and who lived on the lives of men and women, and boys and girls. Without at all insisting on it to himself, he had the secure consciousness of having behind him a long line of ancestors, who had been rulers of men and fathers of their folk, and he had only the serene, ungrudging desire to be as they had been. That was no new feeling in him. It had grown steadily since the departure of his brother. Had Ilkastane been a prosperous place, and had the folk had less need of one to whom they could constantly look for advice and help, he might have never come to assume the position he held. But they needed him, and his inherited instincts and traditions aiding, he gave them himself and all that he had. He was too simple of heart and calm of soul to have ever thought of the Bailie as either less or more than himself, to have ever considered him at all, if it had not been that the Bailie's selfish purpose collided with his high and strong design. He knew he could not (as he might have done had he lived two centuries earlier) order the man away with his machines and his mill, and his only

feeling toward him was a consuming wrath that he should try to grind the faces of the Ilkastane folk—Hutcheon's own people—and embitter their lives. So, with his plaid wrapped close about him and his broad Scots bonnet pulled over his knitted brows, he strode along in well-contained indignation.

Before he reached the mill an incident occurred which added to his anger. The dinner hour (two o'clock) had struck, and the mill poured out its hands. Many of them Hutcheon met—some lads and many lasses. The lasses had bright shawls about their shoulders, and sometimes over their heads, which were powdered with the dust and fluff of the yarn. There was a bold freedom in their look and gait which struck Hutcheon painfully; he was old enough to remember how modest and sonsy the Ilkastane lasses looked before the mill tempted them away from home and threw them into the company of the rough queans from the town. The lasses were straggling all over the way, talking and laughing loudly, and Hutcheon stood aside to let them go by, so that only a few noted his presence and moderated their behaviour.

"That's him," said one. "The young Bailie, of course. Wha other?"

Hutcheon noted upon whom their eyes were turned; a handsome young man, well dressed, erect of bearing, and with a light, springy step.

"He's a bonny lad," said another.

"Oh, dinna ye think o' him, Jean," said the first; "he's ta'en his wale\* already, and a bonny wale she is."

"Dinna blush, Elsie," said a third.

"See, he's gi'en her that ring," said the first, upon which Elsie hid her hand under her shawl.

"He's a bonny lad, Elsie," repeated the second; "I wish I was you."

"Will he mak' a leddy o' her?"

"Na, catch him! Just a light-a-love!"

At these and other thoughtless and cruel remarks Elsie burst into tears.

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\* Choice,

"Ow, she's greetin'!" cried one.

"Aha, my lass," cried another, "ye may hain \* your tears, for ye may need them yet."

"For shame, my dawties!" said Hutcheon, walking in among them. "For shame! Dinna miscall the lassie that gate, and gar her greet! Ah, fy!" Then turning to Elsie, he said, "Dinna heed them, Elsie lass! They dinna mean it; it's just the deevilment the mill puts into them."

The lasses with a constrained laugh ceased their flouts and jeers, and went on their way, and Hutcheon went on his. He did not consider whether or not it was likely that the Bailie would be at the mill in the dinner hour, but he walked right on to the mill, passed the porter's lodge (he had such an air of dignity and authority that no one questioned him), crossed the quadrangle with its pond of warm water, in which it was the Bailie's fancy to keep gold and silver fish, and went to a door marked "*Office*." He entered, and a boy who was eating his dinner from the interior of his desk came forward.

"Is Bailie Lippen in?" asked Hutcheon.

"Wha shall I say wants him?" asked the boy.

"The Maister of Hutcheon," was the answer. "Hutcheon of Hutcheon."

Hutcheon had no sense of being anachronistic in saying that, no consciousness of uttering a vain thing. The boy was as serious as he, and looked at him steadily in the honest endeavour to lay hold of and bear to the Bailie the unusual combination of names. He tapped at an inner door, and entered and said what he had to say.

"Who?" cried the Bailie.

The boy repeated the names with some uncertainty and timidity. The Bailie rose and appeared at the door. He seemed inclined to overflow with unintelligible impatient speech, but at sight of the tall, serious, and imposing figure he paused.

"Ah," said he, "how-de-do," and waited.

"I presume," said Hutcheon, "ye're Bailie Lippen?"



"Lepine," said the Bailie, with a little French bow. "Yes; I am."

"I'd like a private word with ye, Bailie, if ye can make it convenient."

"Who have I the honour? The boy did not speak well the name."

"Hutcheon of Hutcheon; or, if ye prefer it, the Maister of Hutcheon."

"Oh," said the Bailie. He did not yet understand the terms in which Hutcheon was describing himself; yet he could not but feel a certain respectful humility in presence of that tall and serious person. "Will you enter, sir?"

He raised the flap of the counter, and bowed as Hutcheon passed through. When they were in the inner office, the Bailie, still wondering, set a chair, and Hutcheon took off his broad bonnet and sat down. He seemed to fill the little office with his height of body and length of limb. The Bailie glanced at him keenly, and it was clear that the Bailie did not like his eye nor his nose.

"I'm come to you, Bailie, on the part o' the hand-loom weavers o' Ilkastane that have been here the day."

"Ah," said the Bailie with a crocodile snap of his jaw; he now began to feel on ground he was sure of. "I see."

He seemed to signify by his look that he wondered why Hutcheon of Hutcheon, or the Master of Hutcheon, should concern himself about them.

"They're my own folk," said Hutcheon, answering the look; "their forebears have followed my unfort'nate family frae father to son in peace and in war for hundreds o' years. There's not very much o' either of us now, but I stand by them when they have need o' me."

The Bailie bowed again, and looked a little worried; he did not yet quite understand.

"Now, atween gentlemen, Bailie, bargaining and heckling is a mean and damnable business. The love of money—as the Scripture says—is the root of all evil. I ken nothing about money, the Lord be thankit! so I canna try to bargain wi' ye, and I bring ye no evil. Ye come from a country, Bailie, I believe, whaur honour counts first in

a' thing. Now, a gentleman is in honour bound to give his own folk help though it should be from his last bawbee, and a Frenchman is in honour bound no to mak' himself feel mean and damnable by taking from poor folk what they cannot afford to give."

"But, yes," said the Bailie, "it is true. Live and permit to live is very good thing to say."

"It is, Bailie," said Hutcheon, "but ye dinna carry out what ye believe. Ye have offered the folk work at a price that's little better than starvation for them."

"Ah, now," said the Bailie, "you speak business. I offer the weavers as much as I can; there will be for me very little profit, sir. I have quote the wincey at so much for the merchants."

"Then, Bailie," said Hutcheon, "ye must raise your price to the merchants. for the folk must have a better price than ye offered them."

"But I cannot," said the Bailie, growing short of temper. "You do not understand, sir. There is to compete with the steam-looms."

"I understand ye perfectly, Bailie. And that's the damnable thing about it. Ye say ye canna raise the price because o' the steam-looms; but wha set the steam-looms to weave wincey, Bailie? Was it the weavers? They didna want your steam-looms; nobody wanted your steam-looms—nobody but yourself, Bailie. Ye took the weavers' work away, and gave it to your looms, and ye sent such loads o' thin, poor stuff to the merchants, that the price gaed down like a weather-glass; and now ye offer the work back to the weavers, 'cause your looms canna do it well, and ye say, 'Ye maun tak' a small, small price because the trade has been brought low. It's *my* fau't, but *ye* must bear it.' I call that, Bailie, dishonourable and damnable."

That show of argument perplexed and worried the Bailie. He was silent for a little while.

"You know, sir," he said at length. "other mills have looms as mine, and other weavers will work at the prices the Ilkastane weavers do not like."

"That's true, no doubt, Bailie; but it's wi' you my folk

ha'e had to do, and it's them ye've preferred to bargain wi'."

"Well, sir," said the Bailie, "we will not discuss more. Things is done, and they cannot be undone. Have you a proposal, sir?"

"You have offered, Bailie, fourpence per stripe and threepence for fine plain; you should double the figures, Bailie."

"Double? It is impossible," said the Bailie. "When I tell you that the price to the merchants allow me not more than one penny! I will make you the account!"

"Dinna fash, Bailie," said Hutcheon. "I tak' your word for't. But ye must raise your price to them."

"But I cannot. I have promise. I can try to make the orders cancelled, or to get other weavers to weave them, but I cannot raise the price."

Hutcheon meditated and grasped his beard; he believed the Bailie, but yet it was the Bailie's own fault that prices were so low. He felt he ought to stick to the high figures; yet if he held out for them the Bailie might decide to leave the work undone, or to try inferior and cheaper weavers.

"I tell you what, Bailie," said he; "I'll tak' fivepence and fourpence for them. If ye can mak' small profit out o' that ye needna mind this time, for ye ha'e made profits enow afore this."

The Bailie pursed his mouth and stared; but Hutcheon's eye held him humble, and his nose bore him down.

"I will think of it," said the Bailie, "and I will send word to the weavers by Tamson."

"Do nothing o' the kind, Bailie. I've charged mysel' wi' this business, and I'll ha'e no traffic wi' Tamson. There shall nobody come atween you and the weavers but mysel'; so ye'd better mak' up your mind now. See, here's a bit o' paper," said he, taking a sheet from the rack on the table and putting it on the desk before the Bailie. "Just scart a word or twa, to the effect that ye mak' the figures fivepence and fourpence, and the folk'll come for their wabs the morn. Here's a fine-nibbit pen, Bailie."

The Bailie frowned and looked worried, but he did as he

was asked ; he could do no less under that steady eye quite certain of itself, that overbearing nose, and that imposing figure. He wrote rapidly for a second or two, and then he paused to ask :

"How write you 'Maister'?"

"Write it as ye will, Bailie, for a bit paper like that."

So the Bailie spelled the word "Mester," and signed the paper and handed it over to Hutcheon. And Hutcheon, looking at it, said, "I ha'e to wish ye a good day, Bailie," put on his bonnet and strode out.

A little later George Lepine entered the office, and was surprised to see his father marching up and down in a fume.

"What's the matter, father?" he asked.

"What the matter? I have been dam-fool! I have raise the price to the miserable weavers, and set it on paper, and sign with my name! Why? I do not know! It is only that a great monsieur—*grand, gros!*—come in and say, 'Bailie, you are gentleman, you are Frenchman! You must do it!' And I do it, and I know not why at all! *Mon Dieu!*"

"Who was the gentleman?" asked George.

"He call him the Monsieur of Utcheon."

"Ah," said George, "'The Maister.'"

"*Oui*, yes! A great 'mester,' with an eye and a nose! Ah, *oui*, a nose! I think it was the nose that put me out of myself! I have not seen such nose since I was boy in France! The seigneur of the château near where I live had such nose—a terrible nose! A nose that make you shake! A nose that make you fear! And an eye! *Parbleu*, an eye!" So he ran on, as he marched up and down gesticulating. He stopped and looked at George in suspicion. "You know him?" he asked.

"I don't know him," answered George, "but I have heard of him as 'the Maister,' that's all."

"The Maister of Utcheon, he says, Utcheon of Utcheon."

"Did he say that?" demanded George. "But that's a title, something like count. There was a Master of Hutcheon out fighting in the last Stuart Rebellion."

"That is him!" exclaimed the Bailie. "I knew he was the man what fight."

George explained that the fighting he referred to was done more than a hundred years before.

"It is equal," said the Bailie. "But Tamson, perhaps he know."

Tamson was called, and told all he had heard, describing, somewhat grudgingly, Hutcheon's peculiar position in Ilkastane.

"Ah, that is him," said the Bailie. "Did I not say he was of the old noblesse? I feel it in me, for I see many of him before! It is droll."

## CHAPTER VI.

### CONSPIRACY.

HUTCHEON felt it was not a triumphant arrangement he had to announce to his folk, but he showed them it was the best that could have been made under the circumstance, and he cheered them by the promise of a speedy application of the invention—the "Whamleerie"—he had on hand for quickeding the production of striped stuff. They loyally accepted his assurances, all but M'Cree, who "*bu-h-hd*," and glowered, and said there was nobody knew the Bailie as he did, and that they might depend on't the Bailie would make a large profit out of them. The Master could have found it in him to be severe with the preposterous old demagogue, but there were reasons (which have been touched on before) why he felt he must be always patient and tender with him, and so he held his tongue. That was a pity, for M'Cree only puffed himself up with the vain belief that Hutcheon was afraid of him.

So that evening after dark, Hutcheon being withdrawn in his garrets over the weaving-shop, M'Cree came forth

in a fine state of pretentious choler to pour his offence out to Tamson. He lingered in the close a little and listened to the sawing and hammering that came from Hutcheon's rooms, and then he departed, snorting, "Whamleerie! He needna try to put aff his Whamleeries on me!"

Tamson and Tamson's strapping wife received him graciously. Tamson was a big red man with a smooth-shaven face, and a smooth-shaven manner, which a suspicious person would have found crafty and dangerous. But M'Cree was always so occupied with his own importance that he had no room for suspicion of anyone who deferred to him at all. Tamson put the whisky on the table, saying, "It's auld peat-reekit," and Tamson's wife brought out her oat-cakes and set the kettle on the fire, and M'Cree "*buh'd*" and expanded with satisfied pride, thinking that all was done out of compliment to his greatness. That impression was aided by Tamson's opening apology.

"I hope, Saunders," said he, "ye took nae notice o' my manner i' the forenoon. Ye maun aye seem to be hard in business. There I'm the Bailie's tenter and maun do what pleases him; here I'm mysel' and I do as I will," and he gripped Saunders's elbow in the closest, friendliest fashion.

"Ye had your turn, Hew, and I had mine, so say nae mair about it—say nae mair."

While Tamson's wife put the younger children away for the night in the great box bed in the wall (put them away literally, for when they were in bed she drew the sliding panels, leaving only a chink for air), they gossiped about things indifferent, and drank their toddy, and M'Cree's heart grew hot within him and all his grievances boiled up. It was an old grievance that the Bailie had never asked *him* to be a tenter or overseer at the mill, and in his exalted condition he gave it speech.

"Nae offence to you, Hew," said he, "but he might ha' put the job in my way. I dinna think I would ha' ta'en it for I ha'e aye been my ain master, and I maun aye be free to speak out the truth that's in me."

"To be sure, Saunders," said Tamson in his smoothest

and most soothing tone. "And ye brought him north, didna ye?"

"Brought him north to Inverdoon—wha other?—and got him into work, and was the making o' him, as ye may say. And this is his gratitude! When we come across ane another i' the street, it's just, 'Well, M'Cree?' or some French jingle-jangle, and never 'Can I do onything for you, Saunders?' De'il a bit o't!"

"Never ye mind, Saunders," said Tamson's wife, "that's aye the way o' the world. The rale good men aye come warst aff."

"That's it, Saunders," said Tamson. "But what think ye o' the Maister? Dinna ye think he's getting just a wee bit ower ready to put his spoke in?"

"A wee bit!" cried M'Cree. "Gi'e him an inch and he tak's an ell. It's mair than I can stand. Ane o' they days he'll anger me to siccan a pitch that I'll tell him sae. He lets naething go by him; and soon it'll be that a cat canna mew without his wanting to ken what for!"

"But how is't," asked Tamson, "that the lads put up wi' it a'?"

"'Cause they're slaves, min! He lends a hand to wind their wabs, he twists their wabs, and he does other orra things for them, a' for naething." (M'Cree did not confess that the Master performed these services for him also; but Tamson knew that he did.) "And what d'ye think he's after now? He's got a contrivance on hand—a 'Whamleerie,' he ca's it—to fit on to the lay to manage stripes quicker! He's gaun to gi'e them that!"

"Ye dinna mean it!" exclaimed Tamson, his red, pig-gish eyes now all attention.

"But I do!" said M'Cree. "*Bu-h-h!* Let him offer to fit *me* wi' ane o' the trash, I'll address him!"

"But what think ye is his objeck in a' that?" asked Tamson. "It canna be Chartism again; he niver had muckle to do wi't, and he doesna believe in it now."

"Doesna he?"

"He says so."

"If ye believe a' ye hear. Hew." said M'Cree, with a

frown of mystery and a pursing of the mouth, "ye may eat a' ye see. Maister Hutcheon is a deeper ane than ye think; he was aye deep, and the langer he lives the deeper he grows. I could tell ye something; but no, I maunna—I maunna!"

"Come, Saunders," said Tamson's wife, "ye're amang friends; we'll lift naething we hear."

"Na, gudewife, I canna. It wouldna be right. But, Lord! ye'd never guess it! I'd ha' never guessed it mysel' if I hadna seen it."

"Ye ha'ena fed the swine yet, ha'e ye, Hew?" said Tamson's wife aside, as if she did not care a jot whether or not M'Cree disclosed the secret he was bursting with.

"*Bu-h-h!*" said M'Cree. "What would ye say to ane o' the banished Chartists coming back?"

"No!" exclaimed Tamson. "No his brither George?"

"Na; nae him—the villain!"

"It maun be O'Rhea!"

"The verra man," said M'Cree.

"It's no possible!"

"But it's sure as death! I saw him wi' my ain een the day! I kenna what he's come for; I was never consulted about his coming. But what should he come for but to get the Cause up again?"

"Just that!" said Tamson. "And whaur is he?"

"I' the house wi' Maister Hutcheon. Now ye winna speak o't?"

"Hoot, Saunders," said Tamson's wife, "ye ken we dinna lift things."

"Weel," said Tamson, "there'll be some fine can-trips in a jiffey. But I maun see to the swine, Saunders. Just bide ye still and ha'e a crack wi' the wife for a whiley."

Tamson rose and went out. He did not visit the swine, however, but strode off as hard as he could go down the loan and up the burnside. Once in that lonely way he did not scruple to run—run till he reached the gate of Corbie Ha'. He was resolved to tell the Bailie all he had learned both about the "Whamleerie" of the Master, and about the



Master's guest; for though his wife had promised secrecy, he had not.

Meanwhile Hutcheon was working on his invention as fast as saw and hammer and plane would go. The Master was a man of his wits, and he had no pride about what he turned them to. Moreover, he had all the delight of the simple, natural man in making and mending, in the strength of his hands and the finesse of his fingers. For the benefit of his folk (and for something to do) he had taught himself carpentry, and the cleaning and repairing of clocks and watches, as the multitudinous and distracted ticking from the walls abundantly testified. He was at present, however, engrossed with the "Whamleerie." He had a small, complete model on the bench before him, which O'Rhea (who was at a loose end) took up to look at and to finger. Since not only the fortunes of the weavers, but also the progress of this story much depend on the "Whamleerie," it had better be here described.

It was not a complicated or amazing contrivance; indeed, like many a puzzle in science and art, it was so simple the wonder is that it had not been thought of long before. Those who have ever seen a loom need only to be reminded that the "lay" is that horizontal arrangement which, swinging on two uprights, beats the weft into the web. The two layers of web pass over the "bed" of the lay, which is a smooth, sloped groove for the shuttle to run in to and fro, carrying the thread with each flight through the web. In weaving striped fabrics, as many shuttles, of course, are needed as there are colours; and the weaver's slow and clumsy habit was to remove each shuttle from the lay when it had performed its turn, and to replace it when its turn came round again. The problem for Hutcheon was how to keep in the lay at once as many shuttles as were needed, and he had solved it thus:—One end of the lay being cut partly away, a kind of box was fitted on, somewhat longer and wider than a shuttle, and provided with several equidistant shelves or storeys. The box moved up and down on two iron pins fastened to its back; it was raised by a branched cord which rose to the upper part of the lay and

passed over pulleys down to the hand with which the weaver worked his lay, and it descended with its own weight. Each shelf could be provided with a shuttle bearing different coloured weft, and each could be raised or lowered at will to the level of the bed of the lay, so that the shuttle it contained could be shot through the warp as it was needed. That, in brief, is the description of the appearance and operation of the Master's "Whamleerie," as he showed them to O'Rhea.

"You ought to take out a patent for it," said O'Rhea.

"A patent?" said Hutcheon. "What for?"

"Oh," said O'Rhea, "you could make a pile of money out of it, my boy."

"I ha'e no wish to make money out of it," said Hutcheon; "I'm but just makin't to ease the work o' the weavers."

"Never sneer at money. It has great power."

"Ower muckle, Fergus—ower muckle. But money's useful. It would tak' a great deal, though, to buy a patent, I've heard."

"Oh," said O'Rhea, "two or three hundred pound; and," he continued, with a sparkle of interest in his eye, "perhaps you can't afford that."

"I canna. I've no even fifty to spare."

"Then," said O'Rhea, "you must let a patent alone. George, I suppose, has never paid you back the sum he got from you to travel with?"

"How could he, man," said Hutcheon, "when I've never heard from him?"

"Of course. Ah, but you will hear—and hear to some purpose, I believe."

"It's time," said Hutcheon, "that the laddie were coming in; he aye comes to me in the evening to learn his bit lessons for the school."

That seemed an irrelevant thing to say, but O'Rhea quickly divined what was in Hutcheon's thought—how it was that the mention of George should make him think of Kitty's boy. O'Rhea had been until then uncertain whether he or George was suspected of being the boy's father; now he had something like assurance that George

was suspected. But he was curious to know what Kitty might have said.

"You mean the boy Hamish?—Kitty's boy? How is Kitty, by the way?"

"Havena I told ye? Kitty—poor lass!—kens nothing and nobody about her, and has kenned nothing since the night George and you went awa'. She's clean daft, and she just likes to sit a' her lone in her garret, winding and winding her weft, and making her wheel birr and boom. Sometimes she laughs, but maist often she sighs, and soughs, and greets."

"Good G—d!" exclaimed O'Rhea, sitting down with pale face and trembling hands.

"Do you feel ill, Fergus?" asked Hutcheon with concern.

"It's this d—d ague, and what you've just told me. It's awful! Poor Kitty! Poor thing!"

"George shall ken about it," said Hutcheon with a touch of severity, "as soon as I hear whaur he is; and in the meantime I do what I can and look after the laddie. A clever, strong, weel-faur'd laddie he is."

"You're a good fellow, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea fervently, putting his hand on Hutcheon's, "and—it should never be forgotten."

There was a sound of a step on the stairs, and there came a tap at the door, and Hamish entered. He went up to Hutcheon, holding out a folded note.

"A man gi'ed it me; I dinna ken the man, but I met him i' the close."

"For me?" said Hutcheon, looking at its address. He read it—there were but few words—and handed it to O'Rhea. "It's about you."

Thus ran the note, in pencil:

"Someone has been to-night to inform Bailie Lepine that a noted Chartist, Fergus O'Rhea, is lodged in your house. It is for you or for your guest to judge what harm may come of that information.

A WELL-WISHER."

## CHAPTER VII.

## HOW O'RHEA MADE FRIENDS WITH THE BAILIE.

"WHAT will ye do?" asked Hutcheon. "There may be no danger, but it's weel to be on the safe side."

"I'll beard the lion in his den," said O'Rhea, rising and tramping up and down. The presence of danger had a tonic effect on him. "I'll go to the Bailie and make friends with him. Let's see; he's a Frenchman, isn't he, and was in Napoleon's wars? I'll have him before he can stir."

"Ye're no gaun straight off?" asked Hutcheon.

"To be sure I am. Where's my hat?"

"Now, ca' canny, Fergus. The Bailie, I've heard, has his denner at seven o'clock. I daursay wi' a' his dishes and his wine he's no through afore eight. Better bide a wee, and let him get through the thick o't. To mak' a man like the Bailie break off his denner would do ye no good."

"By George! ye're right, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea. "I wish I had a cautious head like you."

"It's bleak and bitter hard for me to be cautious, I can tell ye, Fergus. But there's a time to be cool and cautious, and there's a time to be hot and headstrong; and this is the time to be cautious."

O'Rhea considered Hutcheon a moment with critical eyes. Was that quiet, patient, strong man ever likely to break out in some unexpected fashion? And had he really some great scheme on hand of which his assertion of himself as the Master of Hutcheon was but the flourish or decoration?

"I should not like to have you for an enemy, Hutcheon," was all he said.

"Ye needna, Fergus," said Hutcheon; "I'm no quarrelsome."

And all the while the boy Hamish was listening with both his ears and looking with both his eyes, while Hutcheon worked with chisel and plane on the "Whamleerie." O'Rhea laid a kindly lingering hand on the yellow

head (his own son's head, as he, but no other, knew), and sat down with the boy between his knees. He stroked his hair, which had the same erect obstinacy as his own, and hugged him, and questioned him lightly about his school-learning, being keen to detect and delight in touches of manner and turns of temper that seemed akin to his own.

"What was it, Hamish," asked Hutcheon, "that ye answered when ye knocked at the door and I speered 'Wha's there?'"

"I said 'It's me,'" said Hamish.

"But isna that wrang, Hamish, my man?" said Hutcheon. "Doesna the gremmar bid ye say 'I'? *'It is I; be not afraid.'* Isna that what the gremmar says?"

"But I dinna like to say 'I,'" said Hamish.

"But, Hamish, my mannie, *'be not afraid.'* If it's right to say 'I'—and the gremmar surely kens a' about it—ye should say 'I.'"

"I see!" exclaimed Hamish in glee, breaking away from O'Rhea.

Both the men looked at the boy and considered his trembling eagerness.

"Now, what do you see?" asked Hutcheon.

"I see the way to work the 'Whamleerie,'" he answered.

Hutcheon had fitted his contrivance to an old lay that leaned against his bench, had arranged his cord and pulleys, and with his thumb on the catch of the lay had been making the thing click up and down and driving the shuttles to and fro.

"I see it!" repeated the boy. "Ye pull it up and down wi' the thumb o' that hand on the lay. The string gaes up there, and comes down here to the top o' the 'Whamleerie.' Let me do't!"

"Ye're a clever loon," said Hutcheon, "but I think ye'd better wait till I'm farther on; ye might break something."

The boy was disappointed, and stood frowning, while O'Rhea looked on with a heavy smile of self-satisfaction. It was time, however, to go to the Bailie's; so O'Rhea rose, and begged Hutcheon to let Hamish go with him to point out the way.

In ten minutes they were at Corbie Ha'. They pushed open a side-gate (under a lamp and the stare of a stone leopard looking down from the gate-pillar), walked over the gravel sweep, which was somewhat overgrown with grass that muffled the footsteps, and then O'Rhea sounded a peal with knocker and bell that woke to clamour the rooks in the old firs, and made little Hamish wonder how his companion could be so bold. The big hall-door opened in haste and the depressed Jaques appeared in a fluster. O'Rhea said he desired to see Bailie Lepine on most important business, and he and Hamish were at once shown into a room on the ground floor, which was furnished very much after the fashion of the "apartment" of a poor French bachelor. There was a small bed in a recess; the polished floor was bare of carpet or rug, except by the fire and by the bed.

"The Bailie's snuggery, I suppose," said O'Rhea. "I shouldn't mind lodging here."

He glanced hurriedly round the room. There were several closet and cupboard doors; there was a dressing-table furnished with the usual articles of the male toilet; there was an ample table cumbered with papers and French books; and a good fire was burning in the grate—a distinctively Scottish character being imparted to it by the block of smouldering peat on top.

The Bailie entered, smoking a cigar. He stopped short on seeing a big man—a stranger—with red hair and red beard turning grey.

"*M'sieu*," said he with a bow, "you have something to say?"

"*Monsieur le Bailli*," began O'Rhea in tolerably fluent French, "I have come to ask you to take me under your protection."

"Ah," exclaimed the Bailie, "you speak French. *Asseyez-vous*."

O'Rhea sat down and hoped that in a little while the Bailie would offer him a cigar.

"*Continuez, monsieur*," said the Bailie.

"I return from wandering all through the world," resumed O'Rhea, in his best available French. "I am tired,

ill, and I wish to rest. But eight years ago I was revolutionary—I was Chartist—and I believe a warrant is still in existence for my arrest."

"Ah, yes," said the Bailie, in French, "then you name yourself O'Rhea?"

"I am Fergus O'Rhea."

"I have heard—yes, I have heard this very evening that you are come."

"Truly?" said O'Rhea, in well-feigned astonishment. "Who has been able to tell you?"

"Ah," said the Bailie, "I cannot tell. But evidently my information is true."

"Certainly, a man like you, *Monsieur le Bailli*, has many sources of information. I do not demand to know them. I only pray that the information which you have received you hold to yourself."

"But," said the Bailie, "it is necessary that I acquit me of my duty as magistrate. It is my duty——"

"Duty, *Monsieur le Bailli*, is a stupid word to frighten stupid people; and it always comes to make you do something you do not wish to do."

"Yes; it is true that which you say, monsieur."

"It is necessary that a man of your wisdom and wit, *Monsieur le Bailli*, look at the business himself and not take that which one says of duty. I am that which I have said—a man tired who wishes to rest. I am not a dangerous man."

"And, excuse me, you do not wish to revive your Chartism?"

"To revive Chartism? Chartism is dead as the cause of the Stuarts."

"Ah, *oui*. The Stuarts—your friend, the Monsieur of Utcheon, fight for the Stuarts? No?"

"His ancestor, the Master of Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, "fought for the Stuarts, but not he."

"It is equal," said the Bailie. "He is of those drolls who fight for lost *régimes*. Me, I was not made by the Creator for to fight me; I was all made for affairs, all. But I pay my homages to the ancient noblesse who fight and make

themselves poor for old *régimes*. It is noble! it is magnificent! It makes the romantic."

O'Rhea saw how the Bailie was regarding Hutcheon, and he resolved to make the most of it.

"Oh, yes," said he, "my friend, the Master of Hutcheon, is of the old noblesse of this country, though he is so poor now."

"But it is strange," said the Bailie, "that he is for Chartism too—he."

"He for Chartism? My dear *Monsieur le Bailli*, there is no person for Chartism now. My friend, the Master of Hutcheon, is for other things. He is for to regain his patrimony, for to take his true place among the noblesse and in the government of his country. The Master of Hutcheon, *Monsieur le Bailli*, will soon be rich and great."

"Ah, rich and great, truly?"

"But that is his secret," said O'Rhea, "and I tell it you, *Monsieur le Bailli*, because I know you are discreet and silent, and because I show you that my friend and me, we have other things than Chartism to think of."

"Monsieur O'Rhea," said the Bailie, after he had cracked all his fingers and kept his brows knitted in thought, "I agree. You have reason. I assure me that it is not my duty as magistrate to denounce you as Chartist. I am silent—silent as the priest. But when you promenaded yourself, these others who have known you, will they not say, 'Ah, see, it is him returned. It is the great Chartist O'Rhea'? The—the person who has told me will be silent, I think, but these others?"

"From to-night, *Monsieur le Bailli*," said O'Rhea, "no person shall know me, except the Master of Hutcheon and yourself. Will you permit me?"

He went to the dressing-table, and with a pair of scissors quickly shore off his beard and burnt it. The Bailie, divining his further purpose, offered him a razor, and to expedite and mollify the shaving, put his own shaving-tin of water on the fire. In a few seconds the water was hot enough, and O'Rhea made a lather and lathered himself well. He



then stood with his back to the Bailie, looking in the glass and shaving steadily. In two or three minutes he turned and showed himself. The change effected was one to consider and consider again. No one could have guessed before what the lower part of his face was like; now he showed a strong, square jaw and chin, and a large, full-lipped, and somewhat contemptuous mouth.

"Ah, it is wonderful, the change!" exclaimed the Bailie. "Stay. Now I see. You are of the Revolution. You are French. I will dress you in a very old coat and cravat, and you shall see." He went and unlocked one of the closets, and produced a coat of the time of the first French Empire, and from a box a cravat. "It has forty-five years," said the Bailie. "It is the coat I wore when I went in the conscription. I sent it to my mother and afterwards I begged it from her. It will fit you. Try. I am not high but I am wide."

O'Rhea put on the coat, and turned to the glass to tie the ample cravat. He made a big, loose bow of it, with ends and loops hanging down. Then he faced towards the Bailie, who regarded him across the table.

"I ought to have my hair tied in a queue," said O'Rhea, drawing back with one hand on his stubborn locks.

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the Bailie. "*C'est extraordinaire! C'est Mirabeau!*"

There was, no doubt, a remarkable resemblance to Mirabeau, which was emphasised by the somewhat scorbutic appearance of the skin. O'Rhea turned again, and looked at himself in the glass. He wished he had lived in the days of the Revolution, for then he might have come to something.

At that moment the door opened, and on the threshold stood in astonishment a young lady, small, eager, bright and gay as a humming-bird.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, gazing open-eyed at O'Rhea.

"All right, my child," said the Bailie in English. "I come in one minute." The young lady closed the door, and the Bailie said to O'Rhea, "My daughter. She has this day come from Edinburgh, and before that from Paris. Will

you come here on Sunday and talk? Stay you long time with the Monsieur of Utcheon?"

"Not long, *Monsieur le Bailli*," said O'Rhea. "I am a man who must live alone. I wish to find a little hut—a cabin. I am ill, and it is necessary that I rest. I have a little money, enough to live prudently for the time."

"Ah," said the Bailie, "now I know. I have a very little house just over my wall."

And the Bailie there and then signified that if "Monsieur Mirabeau" cared to try the little house as a domicile he might at a very moderate rental, and the Bailie would give himself the pleasure, since "Monsieur Mirabeau," probably, would not care to go to the expense of buying furniture, of sending in a few articles—superfluities of Corbie Ha'. And it was agreed that it should be so, and that "Monsieur Mirabeau" should enter upon possession on the following Monday, that being Friday.

As they left the house they had a glimpse of Miss Lepine on the stairs; and Hamish (who, though unnoticed, had been very wide awake all the time) went home with three wonders whirling in his mind, wonders hitherto almost unconceived—men talking a language of which he could not understand a word, one man changing himself into another, and an angel gliding towards him down a palatial staircase.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### "A MAN'S FOES . . ."

HUTCHEON was astonished at the new, the exposed O'Rhea who returned with Hamish, but his eyes were too occupied with his "Whamleeries" to have leisure to note how and to what degree he ought to reckon his friend changed. He let that opportunity slip for a readjustment of his estimate of O'Rhea, and having let it slip he had no other, for he

became gradually used to the shaven countenance, and accepted it as that of the O'Rhea he had hitherto conceived—the somewhat hot-headed and domineering man, but the staunch and true-hearted friend.

Hutcheon continued at work far into the night, and O'Rhea (Hamish having long gone home) sat sprawling his arms on the table, drinking heady liquor, and pouring forth heady talk, giving Hutcheon all his confidence (or what seemed his confidence) but getting none in return. That simple, unconscious reserve of Hutcheon's had a curious effect on O'Rhea. He believed that it was maintained of set purpose, and that it hid some deep and far-reaching design; and, in consequence, while it exasperated him, it gave him such a respect for Hutcheon as he had for no other man. And still he sat and talked, his arms sprawling on the table, and the longer he talked and continued to draw inspiration from his tumbler, the redder grew his face and the more like Mirabeau's, the thicker became his voice and the coarser his words, and the taller, the more distant, and the more inscrutable did Hutcheon appear.

At length both were weary and cold, and Hutcheon proposed they should go to bed.

"There's five o' the things," said Hutcheon, raising high one of his candles, and turning to survey the "Whamleeries," "ready for fixing on the lays."

"Oh, damn the things!" said O'Rhea. "Never tell me, Hutcheon, that that's all your mind's set on. You're made for greater things than slicing bits of wood and making puzzle-boxes for a handful of musty weavers!"

"Man," said Hutcheon, "I'm doing for my folk what comes first to my hand. If anything better and bigger comes to my hand to do for them, I'll be none the waur for doing this."

"By G—d, Hutcheon, you're right!—right as always! You've got a way of putting things—you didn't use to have it—that makes me mum. Mark my words, Hutcheon: one of these days you'll have the means of cutting a great figure, and you'll cut it. As the Bailie would say, it is me that tell you so, and when that happens, remember that Fergus

O'Rhea is your friend and will help you through all, thick and thin. There's my hand, my boy."

Hutcheon took his hand, and laid his other on the shoulder of his staunch and true-hearted friend.

"Fergus," said he, "whatever happens, I believe ye."

And so they went to bed. It did not occur to Hutcheon to inquire whether O'Rhea meant anything particular by his prophecy of future greatness: he was too little concerned about himself to wonder if O'Rhea prophesied with knowledge. But that simple lack of curiosity was one more proof to O'Rhea that Hutcheon kept his eyes on some very tall ambition for himself—so tall that all ordinary visions or promises of wealth or consideration seemed beneath his notice. What could that ambition be? and by what means was he securely hoping to attain it?

The day that soon dawned broke over Ilkastane as many a day had broken before—with the insistent clangour of distant mill-bells, and the busy awaking of furnace fires, which poured through their tall chimneys their insulting smoke over the old village. But for all that it was a day full of new meaning for Ilkastane, though Ilkastane knew it not. It was a day to be remembered; it was the first Saturday of the month of March, 1856.

It was Saturday, and that was the day on which Hamish M'Cree received from his grandmother his weekly allowance of pocket-money. The money was paid "in kind," so to say; it consisted of the potato peelings of the week (and other insignificant kitchen refuse of the M'Cree household), which Hamish carried in a pail to Tamson's wife to help to feed Tamson's swine withal. Tamson's wife usually reckoned the contents of the pail at the value of a bawbee, and a bawbee every Saturday morning Hamish, therefore, counted on. On that particular Saturday morning Hamish (after his breakfast of porridge and skim milk) set out with his pail with a less easy conscience than common. He was fond of school; he was *dux*, or first, of his class, and he was afraid of experiencing loss and disgrace that day, for, what with his being taken up the evening before with the Maister's "Whamleerie," and with the expedition to Corbie Ha', he

had had no time to prepare his lessons. He was revolving in his mind whether it would not be better to find some excuse for absenting himself from school (being Saturday, it was only half-day) than to go to be gradually reduced from the top to the bottom of his class, and hang his head under the severe look of his master. In the meantime, however, he went to Tamson's.

Most of the houses in the Ilkastane loan were of two storeys, accommodating from two to four households; the upper households attaining their abodes by an outer stone staircase, the landing of which formed a roof for the simple portico of those below. Tamson, as befitted so prosperous a person, occupied the whole lower half of one of these houses. Hamish rapped at Tamson's heavy door, a heavy foot came grinding over the sanded flags of the passage, and the door opened with a harsh, grating noise. Tamson himself looked down at Hamish, and Tamson's dry voice (as if it were sanded too) bade him "come in by." Tamson was finishing his breakfast, and he requested Hamish to "bide a wee."

"And how's the school getting on?" asked Tamson, with his mouth full.

"Fine," answered Hamish.

"That's right. Ye'll be getting a braw scholard, I'm thinking," said Tamson.

Hamish was modestly silent.

"Ye'll be gaun on at sic a rate that there'll be naething mair for you to learn—winna that be it?"

"Na," said Hamish, with a lively sense of the illimitable field of knowledge still before him.

"Ha'e ye started the Lettin and the Olgebra yet?" asked Tamson, with a wink to his eldest son, a leggy, grinning youth of sixteen.

"I've started the Latin," said Hamish. "I ken *amo-amavi*."

"Do ye, though? Weel, we'd better start for the swine; I maun tak' them their breakfast. Ye'd like to see the swine, wouldna ye? Nice cratur's swine is," said Tamson, leading the way with a pail of his own in one hand and

Hamish's light pail in the other, while Hamish looking up at him had a vague feeling that his shaven but bristly cheek, and his small reddish eyes, made him seem not unlike a swine himself.

"Ye aften do your lessons wi' Maister Hutcheon, dinna ye, Hamish?" he asked when they were out of the house.

"Ay," said Hamish, "I aye do them."

"Ah, but ye'll ha'e to leave aff for a while, as I understand. He's making some contrivance or other he means to keep at late and early, I've heard."

"He's made it," said Hamish in triumph.

"Made it!" exclaimed Tamson, stopping to bore into him with his piggish eyes. "It's no possible, man?"

"He's made a good mony," said Hamish.

"Has he? They canna be hard to mak', then. Ye canna tell me what the thing's like, I suppose. Na—little loons like you dinna tak' notice o' they things; ye're thinking aye o' taps and strings, and thrummles and draygons."

"I ken what it's like," said Hamish in some offence.

"Do ye? Come, now, tell me, then."

And Hamish, desiring to show how clever he was, and not knowing he was betraying a secret, described the "Whamleerie" sufficiently well to convince Tamson that it was a valuable invention, and to inflame his covetous heart with the longing to possess it for his own. He was shrewd enough to make light of it, however, even to Hamish.

"A bonny thing, I daursay. But I dinna see the use o't. So ye ha'ena started the Olgebra yet. But ye ken your arith-mettic, I daursay. D'ye ken subtraction?"

"I'm lang past that," said Hamish with some resentment.

"Ye can tak' seven from eight, may be," said Tamson, posing him, "but it'll stick ye to take eight frae seven."

"Ye can tak' eight frae seven if ye borrow one."

"Ay, min," said Tamson, "is that it? Ye borrow one. Weel, min, that's a gey good notion to borrow one. Ye're a clever loon, Hamish; ha'e!"

To Hamish's intense surprise and delight Tamson gave him a penny, which, of course, was equivalent to two "bawbees." He was so seized with the possession of that

magnificent sum that he forgot his grandmother’s pail, and set off at a run, not quite knowing whither he went. That was the last touch that set his attention and fancy all astray. The strange experiences of the evening before—the “Whamleerie,” O’Rhea’s speaking in an unknown tongue and turning himself into another man, and the vision of an angel—these had unsettled all his former notions of things, and now the receipt from Tamson of a glorious penny sent them flying. He had, like his elders, his preconception of the scheme of the world. Certain things had happened to compel a reconsideration and a reconstruction of that scheme, and away he went into space in the meantime.

Tamson, on the summons of the mill-bell, returned to his duty at the Hargate, but through it all he was reckoning up the value of Hutcheon’s invention. His knowledge of the power-looms showed him how easy it would be to adapt the invention for their use, and how valuable it would be to them when adapted. As yet on the power-looms there had not been attempted the weaving of striped wincey; it was not worth while with the constant and tedious changing of shuttles, but with the “Whamleerie” stripe could be accomplished as well as plain. If the invention were his, Tamson thought, and if he had money, he would patent it at once, and his fortune would be made. But he had no money—at least, not enough for that. Still, he could sell it to a wealthy man like the Bailie. And why should he not make one of his own and sell *it* to the Bailie? Tamson had no creative or inventive gift, but he was quick to apprehend. He had sufficiently understood from Hamish’s description the points of the contrivance, but who would ever suspect him of having got his idea from a boy of seven? The Ilkastane weavers came about twelve o’clock, according to compact, to receive their webs, but it did not at all touch the organ which Tamson, like any other, would call his “heart,” that he was plotting to deprive these poor wretches, who aforetime had been his comrades, of a contrivance that had been intended solely for their benefit.

When he got home for the week he gave himself scarcely time to eat his dinner, so eager was he to try his hand at

making a "Whamleerie." He shaped his pieces of wood, and nailed them together, and sand-papered them (for he also had some knowledge of carpentry); but when these things were done he knew not what else to do. He did not understand whether the thing was meant to work horizontally or perpendicularly. And all the while there ran in his head the words of Hamish—"if ye borrow one." He left his occupation, put his hands in his pockets, and stepped out into the loan. There he found a considerable stir. Hamish M'Cree had not been seen since morning (and it was then well on in the afternoon), and old M'Cree had gone one way and "the Maister" another to look for him. And Tamson exulted, for now it was possible for him to get a sight of "the Maister's Whamleerie." "The Lord hath delivered it into my hand!" thought Tamson; for the wicked man is as ready as the righteous to claim Providence, if he can, as a partner in his designs.

He waited until it was dark, and then he slipped into Hutcheon's close. He noted that there was no light in Hutcheon's windows, and he stepped carefully up the stairs, for there were weavers in the shop below, and tried the latch of Hutcheon's door. It was locked. He felt for the key under the "bass" or mat (the common hiding-place for door-keys in Ilkastane), found it to his great joy, and opened the door. A lump of peat glowed in the grate, but not sufficiently to send any light abroad. Tamson quickly gathered a handful of shavings and set them on the fire. When they burned up he crouched low lest his tall figure should be seen through the window, and fastened his eyes on the "Whamleerie" that was fixed in the lay. He put more shavings with a stick or two on the fire, and then turned to carefully examine the working of the thing. He drew it up and let it fall; but he was afraid to drive the shuttle to and fro lest the weavers below should hear the noise.

"By George!" he murmured. "It's no that ill!"

He was about to rise when a strong hand seized him by the back of the neck. He managed to wrench his head round, and saw a big man, close shaven, with a grin creasing his cheeks.



"Nice bit of work that, isn't it?" said the big man. "Means a lot of money to anybody but a fool like Hutcheon, don't it?"

"By George!" murmured Tamson. "It's O'Rhea! I ken the voice."

The hand let go its hold, and Tamson turned, still crouching, while O'Rhea sat down over against him with his arm on the table and laughed a subdued, wicked, derisive and exasperating laugh—the laugh of an arrogant but suspicious man who knows what danger is, but who cares little what another may say and do. The ruddy glow of the fire made Tamson's crouching figure seem more grotesquely huddled than it was, and threw up with effect the astonishment and perplexity of Tamson's face.

"Ay, Hew," said O'Rhea, imitating Tamson's dialect, "ye ken my voice, do ye? Even a black sheep kens the shepherd's voice." And he sniggered again. "Oh, Tamson, Tamson! I doubt ye'll come to a bad end. Ye began as a Chartist traitor, Hew."

"Me?"

"Ay, Hew, you. Nobody but you gave the information that made me and George Hutcheon run seven years ago; nobody but you, I believe, went to my friend Bailie Lepine last night and tried to set him against me; and now you come here like a thief in the night, Tamson! Tamson, Tamson," continued he, "your account's running up, but I'll let you have tick a while longer, if so be you behave yourself. Meantime you'd better hook it. Hutcheon may be in any minute."

Tamson rose to his feet and came near.

"Come, now, Fergus," said he, "as man to man——"

"'A man's a man for a' that,'" sniggered O'Rhea. "Oh, Tamson! O you Scotch humbug!" Tamson was about to resume. "Oh, get out! I believe I hear Hutcheon in the close! Get out, and lock the door as you found it."

And Tamson "got out" in some trepidation, and argued from O'Rhea's last direction that he did not mean to mention to Hutcheon his burglarious visit.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE ADVENTURES OF TAMSON'S PENNY.

HAMISH had no clear intention of either playing truant or spending his penny when he burst away from Tamson and the pigs. He merely obeyed an overwhelming impulse to be free and at large, to give way to an abounding sense of life and of the promise of life. He was little more than a child, but the child who has health and faculty has a keener joy of such life as he knows or imagines than has the man who has been tutored by experience into wariness and doubt.

Hamish sped away up the loan, and on towards the town, for there, among the rows of shops and the throngs of people and animals, on the quays and near the ships, lay the fruition of all hope, the satisfaction of that curiosity concerning the unknown which agitates and impels all young and romantic souls. Presently ahead of him he recognised young Mr. Lepine. He knew him by his walk; that step which did not thud or drag at the heel, but which trod the ground with one firm, light pat, as if it scorned it, and sprang a little as if in buoyancy of spirit. Hamish did not venture near. He feared he might be questioned about his evasion of school, and perchance be ignominiously marched back; but he set himself again to imitate that admirable step. Yet, alas! he felt it cruelly that it was not given to weaver-boys to tread the ground with well-bred scorn. Their shoes do not fit very neatly and their soles are thick and unyielding. Young Mr. Lepine turned aside to the Hargate Mill, and Hamish continued on his way with a freer attention.

It was a perilous adventure upon which he had set out, demanding of him as much nerve and resolution as a soldier would need to pass, unarmed and alone, through a hostile country. He had not even the comfort of being ignorant of the dangers which he must face or circumvent. He had gone that way before, but always in the company of a full-

grown man. First of all there was a wide and lonely stretch of road which led him past a great lunatic asylum, where strange men grinned and giggled at him between strong iron railings, or gibbered at him over a very high wall, and past the public shambles whence came always frightful bellowings and whither were always being driven, by shouting men and barking dogs, droves of great cattle with rolling eyes and threatening horns—wild bulls, Hamish thought them all—which always boggled at entering the wide gates of the slaughter-ground, and frequently galloped madly away in terror and rage, spreading dismay along the road. Then, as he neared the town, there was a narrow way which had houses and closes on the one hand, swarming with dirty children, and on the other an open and unprotected muddy burn which came from underground, and flowed sulkily along under a fringe of trees and bushes on the farther side. There rats squeaked and plunged, and children yelled and fought. The passage through that lane Hamish feared more than even the lunatics and the wild bulls; for big rough boys and girls had often threatened him with violence there even when he was in the company of Steven or “the Maister.”

These perils, however, he safely passed. The lunatics grinned and gibbered, but he trotted by with averted head; by the shambles there was not a wild bull to be seen (for it was Saturday), and the narrow way by the burn he took at a pelting rush. And so he was in the town, and presently was wandering along a busy street where horses and carts clamped and clattered, where people pushed past him on the pavement, unheeding his alert and quaint figure arrayed in Glengarry and tartan.

He could now feast his eyes on the great shop windows at his leisure; for when in town, hitherto, his big companions had hurried him along, heedless of his expressed desire to “bide” and look. He now lingered at the windows of confectioners’ shops, grocers’ shops, toy shops, and, most of all, booksellers’ shops, where volumes stood open with pictures displayed. It was not mere curiosity that held him, but the keen desire of possession. Though so young he had

something of the feeling of the Highland cateran when he descended from his wilds into a Lowland town, or of savage old Blucher when he rode through London city and exclaimed "Was plunder!" There was nothing of all he saw that his eye passed over as unworthy of possession, and he restlessly turned his penny in his warm hand. There were so many things to buy—things to eat, and things to look at—and there was, after all, so little to buy them with that he moved along from shop to shop in a complete embarrassment of desire, and came to the end of his engrossed survey with Tamson's penny still in his hand.

He had arrived at the top of a steep street, at the bottom of which he saw the masts of ships, crowded together like the trees of the wood of Drumoak, and bare as those trees in winter. Beyond the masts shone the river, and beyond the river rose the stern hills that shut out the mysterious world of the south. Hamish stood and gazed, and felt himself on the verge of dangers and delights unknown. He had learnt enough at school and heard enough among the weavers to know that the ships in the harbour sailed to strange ports and to strange lands; and he went down among them to consider their aspect, and to form pictures to himself of the places and the people whence they had come. When he reached the bottom of the street he found himself in a bewildering bustle. Along the quay rolled and clattered heavy horses and drays, and on rails there glided great waggons piled with coal or loaded with sacks and boxes; while above all, at the edge of the quay, towered the sides and the masts of the great ships and steamers, and snorted and caracolled here and there the busy donkey engines.

Hamish was possessed and taken out of himself by the strange sights, the strange noises, and the strange smells. The last were especially strange and pungent. With the pleasant scent of tar and pitch, and the mixed and musty odours of merchandise, there was mingled the stench of the harbour (or "shore") water which a flowing tide was endeavouring to dilute and make wholesome with its outer brine. The tide was flowing—was, indeed, almost at its

height—and therefore the dock gates were open, so that neither Hamish nor any could pass to the other side, which gave upon the “Inches” and the bank of the river, without going round by the drawbridge. He thus could see little of those magnificent clippers, for the building of which Inverdoon was become famous. As he wandered along the inner quay, however, he came upon one of these graceful ships and gazed with delight. She had just been launched and her masts were being put in. Her fresh paint and gilding and her great height and length attracted his eye, and her beauty of line, the fine curve of her bows, as in a picture, and the sweep of her stern, held him without his knowing why. He gazed up at the figure-head, a fierce black man, whose body streamed backward into the lines of the ship, with staring eyes and great white turban, and he read the legend in gold scroll-work on the bows and on the stern—Surajah Dowlah—and wondered to what mysterious land of balm and spice, of bloodshed and idolatry, the ship would sail anon with her flags and pennons flying, and her sails swelling out to the wind, and her swarming sailors, with rings in their ears and quids in their cheeks, shouting “Heave-ho!” He wished he were a man and a seafarer, to be ever in the sun and the wind, and to sail over shining seas by dangerous reefs and near wooded shores, where lurked wild beasts and savage men, on to a friendly land, whence would come in gayest welcome swift and curious canoes filled with smiling natives and laden with cocoa-nuts. To Hamish the crown and glory of tropical produce was the cocoa-nut.

But while he thus stood and dreamed, gazing up at the Surajah Dowlah, there came upon his ear the sound of many excited voices and the running together of many people. He turned, and saw men and women, boys and girls, flocking in haste, with laughter and cries, from street and close over the wide quay to a certain spot he had passed where was an empty space between the ships. Seeing all the people run, Hamish ran too, over cables and chains, and under gangways from the decks of ships, until he arrived at the place where the crowd was gathering.

Then he saw what attracted all. A large steamer, whose enormous paddles were beating the harbour water into white froth, was pushing and edging into the empty space between the ships, while big shore porters kept the crowd back with their shouts and their strained efforts to attach ropes from the steamer to mooring posts. The steamer seemed crowded with Highland soldiers in all their parade pride of red jackets, with plaids flaunting from the shoulder, and bonnets with dancing plumes. As the vessel pushed closer and closer to the quay, one soldier and another and another recognised his friends ashore and shouted strange greetings, to which friends and friends' friends responded with extraordinary excitement. By listening intently to what he heard around him, Hamish learned that this was "the London boat," and that these were the "Hieland laddies" returning from the war—the great "Rooshian war"—which Hamish was learned enough to know had but just come to an end. Then Hamish himself began to burst with excitement, and he wished he were a friend of a soldier, with whom he might exchange greetings.

The excitement of the whole crowd attained its height, and boiled and bubbled over when there was heard approaching along the quay, from the Castle-hill, the band of the Highland regiment then in garrison in the Castle. At first drum and fife were heard shrilly demanding, "Whaur ha'e ye been a' the day, bonnie laddie, Hieland laddie?" and then the bagpipes raised a wild and stirring strain which Hamish did not know, all in honour of the soldiers returning from the war. The crowd opened to receive the pipers and the rest with loud "hoochs!" of welcome, and submitted gaily to be pushed back by the sergeant and his squad that had come with the band to keep a space clear for landing. But the interest and excitement passed all bounds when the grim and bearded warriors came down the gangway one by one. Then it was seen what a terrible business the war had been for many. This one came ashore on crutches, that one with an empty sleeve, while a third limped with the aid of a staff.

"Eh, wae's me!" exclaimed an old woman. "But the puir Hieland lads, ha'e they a' tint \* something?"

"And if they ha'e," cried another, "they maun a' ha'e foughten weel, and they're bonnie men ane and a'!"

"They're a' frae Scutari," said one of the soldiers on guard—"the hospital—the infirmary, ye ken. That's what for they're hame first."

It was only later that Hamish understood what that meant. Then he but saw with all his eyes these great, noble, bearded men, and believed they appeared—halt, maimed, and worn as they were—fresh from the heat and horror of battle. He expected to see them wearing their swords bare and blood-stained; but though all bore knapsacks and bayonets at their side, many did not even carry muskets. Yet, when the chief piper swelled his broad chest and blew into his pipes, and the other pipers did likewise, and the escorted soldiers formed fours, and when to the shrill martial strains of "The Campbells are Coming!" they all marched away proudly swinging kilt and plaid, then Hamish's heart and soul went out to the Highlanders; he felt as if he were a soldier himself, and invested with the glory of military prowess. He tramped and trotted along, with the jostling crowd, by the leg of a stalwart soldier. As they marched on to the Castle with the skirling pipes in their van, the crowd attracted to itself more and more excited spirits. At one point a hale old woman, wrinkled and ruddy as a winter apple, burst from the crowd with a cry of "Oh, Geordie! Eh, my bonnie bairn!" She was raised in the arms of a big soldier, who exclaimed "Mither!" kissed her, and set her down again before she was aware. Then the two tramped along hand in hand without another word. The crowd laughed and cheered in the maddest sympathy. The laughter and cheers were redoubled, and dashed here and there with women's tears, when a poor old man, who had been caught away by the general excitement from his wretched occupation of vending water-cress (or "sourocks") pushed through the crowd, and standing on its inner edge

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\* Lost.

bestowed handful after handful of his stock-in-trade on the passing heroes till not a blade remained in his basket. It was so spontaneous, and so completely generous an offering, although it was so poor, that it could not fail to touch all hearts. Tears sprang to the eyes of even the grim, bearded soldiers themselves, and Hamish was moved in a way which he could not understand. Tamson's penny still lay warm in his grasp. He opened his hand and held out his treasure to the soldier by whom he was marching.

"Ha'e," he said.

"Hallo, kornel," said the soldier, looking down. "What is't? A maik? No, a penny! Good for you. Na, na, my mannie, keep it to your nainsel'!"

So saying, he caught Hamish from the ground and swung him to a seat on his shoulder, and laughter and cheers broke out afresh.

Hamish was very soon at his ease on his lofty perch, and he surveyed with delight the agitated ostrich plumes of the soldiers and the eager and excited faces of the surging crowd. Thus he traversed the rest of the way to the barracks on the crown of the Castle-hill, and was so well pleased with himself and his position that he forgot all about the passage of time and the possible anxiety of those at home. At the barrack gates the crowd was excluded, but Hamish still kept his perch. Once in the barrack-square, however, he had to descend and stand aside while the soldiers went through some formality, before an officer, of having their names called or what not.

"Bide a wee," said his friend when he set him down. "I'll be back to ye the noo." \*

The formality over, the returned heroes separated this way and that as guests of the regiment in garrison. Hamish's friend came to him.

"Come on, kornel," said he, taking his hand, "we're gaun to ha'e our denner. And what's your name, kornel?"

"Hamish M'Cree," answered Hamish.

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\* The noo—at once.



"No, min!" exclaimed the soldier. "Ye dinna mean the M'Crees o' Ilkastane?"

"Ay," said Hamish, "I bide at Ilkastane wi' my granny, and I aye learn my school-lessons wi' the Maister."

"Ye mean wi' the schoolmaister."

"Na, I mean Maister Hutcheon."

"To be sure," said the soldier, "I had forgotten. Weel, kornel, I'm frae Ilkastane mysel'. So shak' hands. Ye ken auld Saunders M'Kay?"

"Ay," answered Hamish, "I ken him fine."

"And maybe ye've heard o' his loon Donald, a wild nickem they ca' him, dinna they?" asked the soldier with a grin.

"I dinna ken," said Hamish.

"Weel," said the soldier, "I'm Donald. And how's the auld man, my feyther? Is he brawly? Footin' it about, and hoastin'\* as usual, I daursay, puir auld man. But come on, kornel; we'll ha'e some broth, and then me and you'll gang hame thegither."

Hamish was astonished and delighted with the condescension and affability of the great warrior, though somewhat disappointed to find him nothing more than a son of old Saunders M'Kay. But when they entered the barrack-room to which he was led, and his friend and the others took off their imposing plumed bonnets and showed nothing more than common heads of men—heads, indeed, that were strangely and unusually bearded—he was perplexed, and found it necessary to reconstruct his idea of a soldier who had fought the Russians.

He was made much of by the warm-hearted fellows. He was placed at the barrack-table with a spoon and a knife, and there was set out for him a Benjamin's mess of the broth and the beef and the bread. But before he or any of the company began to eat, his friend Donald turned to him.

"Nae doubt," said he, "ye're a braw scholar, kornel. Let's be dacent now that we're hame, and say grace."

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\* Coughing.

"Ay," said another, "let's ha'e a grace. It's a lang time since we had a guid Scots screed."

So Hamish put his hands together, shut his eyes, and said grace, while the soldiers looked at him and listened.

"Man, kornel," said Donald, when Hamish had said "Amen" and opened his eyes, "ye'd mak' a braw minister! Ye'll wag your pow in a pulpit yet, min!" he added with an emphatic nod.

Hamish was delighted to be thought so highly of, and gossiped about all his friends in Ilkastane and his school attainments till the dinner was at an end and it seemed time to go home.

"We'll just ha'e a dram in the canteen," said Donald, "and then we'll hand awa' out hame."

So to the canteen the whole party adjourned. They sat down at a table and called for a dram. One dram led to another and to a general demand for an "auld Scots sang." So they drank drams and sang "Scots sangs"—songs sentimental and songs warlike—till the afternoon wore away and the dusk began to gather; and all the while Hamish sat in a chair as a kind of president, with his legs rather painfully dangling, and wondered at the changes that gradually came over the faces and voices of the soldiers, and the confidences that were imparted to him on this side and on that. He kept urging his friend Donald to "come hame," but Donald kept replying, "Bide a wee, kornel." At length came a demand for a song from "the kornel."

"The kornel's a scholard. The kornel says grace. Consequently—and that's logic—the kornel sings sangs. Come, kornel, a sang."

It happened that Hamish had just learned a song at school, so he modestly agreed to oblige the company. He had but just been mounted on the table to deliver himself with the greater effect, and was singing—

"See the conquering he-he-he-he-hero co-ome!"

when "The Maister," Hutcheon himself, entered and stood towering over the cheering soldiers.

## CHAPTER X.

## NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY.

HAMISH ceased his song and blushed, and Hutcheon gazed in amazement from him to the applauding soldiers.

"What the sorra are ye doin' here, laddie?" he exclaimed. "This is a queer ploy for a steady chiel like you! Your gran'father and me's been lookin' for ye high and low, thinkin' something might ha' happened to ye comin' out o' the school."

"I ha'ena been to the school," said Hamish, hanging his head.

"No been to the school!" exclaimed Hutcheon. "That's waur and waur! My certy! An' ha'e ye been truantin' the lee-lang day?"

"I didna ken," said Hamish, "it was sae lang. It was the penny that did it—Hew Tamson's penny."

"Ay, min," said Hutcheon, with a smile, "though ye're but a wee bit loon ye're like the first man in the garden. *He* said it was the apple; *ye* say it was the penny; it comes to the same thing. It's human natur', I daursay. But how cam' Hew Tamson to gi'e ye a haill penny?"

"It was for the swine's meat," answered Hamish, simply, "and 'cause he thought I was gettin' on at the school."

"To be sure," said Donald M'Kay, who, with the other soldiers, had listened attentively to this passage of dialogue between Hamish and Hutcheon. "Of course the kornel's a scholar."

"Surely, man, I ken you," said Hutcheon, laying his hand on Donald's shoulder.

"To be sure, Maister Hutcheon," answered Donald, with a loud laugh and a fierce grip of Hutcheon's hand; "of coorse, ye ken me. I'm just auld Saunders M'Kay's loon Donald."

"An' ye're hame frae the war," said Hutcheon, "wi' your *spolia opima*?"

"Ay," said Donald, "just that. Spoil me this or spoil me

that, we've come by the London boat. An' how's a' wi' the folk at Ilkastane? My auld feyther, I daursay, is aye hirplin' and hoastin' about?"

Then Hutcheon sat down and gossiped freely about all things in the little world of Ilkastane, and inquired concerning the soldiers' experiences abroad; and it is worthy of remark that the soldiers paid homage to that something of unconscious dignity and domination in Hutcheon's manner by addressing him as "Sir," though he was attired scarcely better than the average weaver.

"And now," said Hutcheon, after a while, addressing Donald, "ye'll be comin' hame wi' us to see the auld man, your father. He'll be thinkin' lang to set een on ye."

"Na, Maister Hutcheon," said Donald, "na, min. The auld man'll no be thinkin' lang for me, 'cause he doesna ken I'm comin'. What the head doesna ken the heart doesna grieve. But I'm comin'—hoot ay, I'm comin', whenever I get my *doch-an-dorrach*."

So, since Donald spread himself for the enjoyment of his final glass, Hutcheon and Hamish set out by themselves on their return to Ilkastane. Hamish, when he thus found himself alone with "The Maister," feared that he might be scolded for his day's conduct. To deprecate Hutcheon's anger, therefore, he held tight to the lean, strong hand, and looked up the while into the kind face.

"Weel, sir," said "The Maister," "ye've begun early to gang out to see the world, and to walk up and down in it. And, I daursay, ye've waired \* the muckle penny Hew Tamson gi'ed ye?"

"Na," said Hamish, "I've got it yet."

And he held up the coin between finger and thumb, and explained, while Hutcheon lent an attentive ear, how difficult he had found it to decide on buying anything, and how at length, when others were bestowing gifts on the soldiers, he had offered his penny to Donald, which Donald would not take. By that time they had passed through the barrack-gates, about which were gathered friends or relatives of

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\* Spent.

the soldiers, waiting to be allowed to pass in to them or to receive them when they came out. Then, as they went down the Castle-hill and across the great market-square named the Castlegate, Hamish recalled and vividly described the strange incidents of the triumphal progress of the returned soldiers.

"Oh," exclaimed Hamish, "wouldna I like to be a sodger!"

"Ay," said Hutcheon, considering him, "ye would, would ye? Weel, it's nae wonder, for ye come o' fightin' folk. Your forefathers were a' men o' the sword."

"Was my father a man o' the sword?" asked Hamish; he liked the ring of the phrase "men o' the sword," and he had often before asked about his father and been put off by Hutcheon with the assurance that if he would "bide a wee" he would know all.

"Na," answered Hutcheon, "your father wasna, but your grandfather was, and a lang string afore him."

"Ye mean Grandfather M'Cree?" asked Hamish.

"Na, na," said Hutcheon, with some curtness, "I did no mean him—though he has been a kind o' a sodger in his time in a sma'-fee'd sort o' way. I meant your gran'ther on the other side, though I should rightly ha' said your great-gran'ther, for your gran'ther was just a douce, canny man wi' a supple cane for lads that gaed truanting, and mony's the time he laid it on me."

Hamish looked up and smiled. He felt a new sort of kinship with Hutcheon since he had played truant also, whilst he knew that there was no cane in pickle for him.

Once among the shops again Hamish wished to linger to feed his eyes upon the treasures of the windows, but Hutcheon let him stay only once at a bookseller's, saying that he must be "getting on," for he had business to do. In the bookseller's window was displayed a cheap edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, laid seductively open at a gorgeously coloured picture of the hero recoiling in terror from the footprint in the sand. Hamish exclaimed "Oh!" and drew Hutcheon down to admire. He so evidently panted to possess the book that "The Maister" took pity on him.

"Ye'd like that book for your ain, wouldna ye? It looks gey grand."

"I ken the man it's about," said Hamish eagerly. "He had a cat and a dog and a parrot, and the parrot used to say 'Poor Robin! Robin Crusoe!' I've read that in the school-book."

"Ye'd like to buy the book, I daursay," said Hutcheon.

"But I've naething but a penny," said Hamish.

"May be," said Hutcheon, with a smile that made Hamish's heart leap, "I've two-three pennies more. Come awa' in."

So they entered the shop, and Hutcheon inquired the price of the book. The price was enormous—a whole half-crown!—but Hamish promptly put his penny down and looked at Hutcheon with an appeal in his eye for the rest of the sum. The price was paid, and Hamish left the shop without his penny, but with such a treasure caught to his heart as he had never possessed in his life before.

"Now," said Hutcheon, "I maun see to my business."

By the side of the old court-house ran a narrow street in a corner of which lurked the door of the police-station. Down this street passed Hutcheon and stopped opposite the station, at a door on which glowed a big brass plate with the inscription, "Henderson, Advocate." Hutcheon knocked, and while he waited he said to Hamish, pointing across the way:

"I had to speir at the Police about ye; it's a wonder they didna tak' ye up for a vagabond loon."

"What's your wull?" asked an old woman in a mutch who opened the door.

"I wish to see the advocate," said Hutcheon.

"It's lang aifter business time, sirs," said the old woman.

"I ken that brawly," answered Hutcheon, "but the advocate's expectin' me. I was here a while ago, but couldna bide; I said I'd come back."

"Weel," objected the woman, "I kenna——"

"Gae 'wa', woman," interrupted he, "and tell the advocate the Maister o' Hutcheon's here."

He said that with such an air of authority that the old

woman looked at him in some surprise and then stood aside to drop a curtsey and admit him. He (and Hamish at his heel) was ushered into an office where the gas burned low. The old woman turned up the light, and left them. While they waited Hamish let his eyes rove about the room and wondered if the black tin boxes with white-lettered names were a new, private, and reduced kind of coffin. Presently there bustled in a dry and dusty-looking little man in spectacles.

"Weel, Maister Hutcheon," said he, "ye're back, and this, I daursay, is the lost sheep ye were lookin' for. But wiinna ye come ben to the parlour? There's a fire there."

"I thank ye, Mr. Henderson," said Hutcheon, "but I'm no cauld. This'll do fine. Ye had something o' great importance to tell me, I think ye said?"

"Ay, sir," said the old lawyer, unlocking a drawer and taking from it a letter. "Here we are. Meanwhiley," continued he, looking over his spectacles at Hamish, who was all attention and curiosity, "the laddie can be lookin' at the braw book I see he's got."

Hamish was covered with shame, for it was the first time in his young life he had been reproved for seeking to understand what was going on; and he therefore made up his mind to dislike Mr. Henderson. He opened his book, however, and the lawyer sat down over against "The Maister."

"Ye had a brither, Maister Hutcheon?" said the lawyer.

"*Had?*" exclaimed Hutcheon. "I *have*,—have I no?"

"Weel," said the lawyer, taking a pinch of snuff, and evading the question, "ye'll be wonderin' how I kenned about your family."

"I canna say," answered Hutcheon, "that it has come to me to wonder anything o' the kind, for my family has been to the fore and spoken o', I believe, sin' lang-syne."

"Achy. Nae doubt, sir, nae doubt. I only was meanin' to indicate that I was able to put my hand on ye, and identify ye as the person mentioned in this letter—hide and ye'll understan' what I mean—because I've heard ye

spoken o' by my frien', Mr. Sharpe, wha is, I believe, your man o' law."

"A' the dealin's in law I've ever had, and they're no mony," said Hutcheon, "ha'e been through Mr. Sharpe; that's right enough. Say awa'."

"Weel," said the lawyer, "this is a letter to me frae my correspondent, Mr. Cochrane, Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, wha has had a certain application made to him by his correspondents, Messrs. Sykes & Power of Calcutta. The said Messrs. Sykes & Power ask the afore-named Mr. Cochrane, and he asks me to seek out—these are the words—'In the village of Ilkastane, near Inverdoon, or, as having been resident in the said village seven years ago, the Master of Hutcheon, commonly known simply as Mr. James Hutcheon.'"

"Aweel, sir," said Hutcheon, with a touch of impatience, "ye ken I'm the Maister o' Hutcheon. Say awa', sir. What do they want wi' me?"

"The afore-named agents in Calcutta ha'e in their hands property o' a Mr. George Hutcheon to the tune o' £20,000 and a will o' the same person executed in favour o' his brither James, the Master o' Hutcheon."

"I *had* a brither, ye said the now. I'll be obliged to ye if ye'll be plain. Is my brither Geordie dead, or livin'?"

"The agents report," continued Mr. Henderson steadily, "that undeniable evidence is forthcoming that Mr. George Hutcheon died in January in the service of the King of Oudh."

"Geordie dead!" exclaimed "The Maister." "Foul fa' the day! And I ha'ena had a word frae him sin' he gaed awa'. What died he o'? Do they say?"

"It is said that he was killed in some sma' disturbance among the natives."

"Killed!" exclaimed Hutcheon, grasping his staff. "An' nae kith or kin at hand to help him. It's terrible. An' Geordie never was for fightin', though he was stubborn and wadna be put down easy."

"It's a sad affliction," said the lawyer, peering at him over his spectacles; "but there's the siller to be seen to.



Come ben to the fire i' the parlour and ha'e a drap o' comfort, and I'll read over the haill letter."

"Ye'll excuse me," said Hutcheon, "but I'll bide here. Among they *memento moris*," indicating the black tin boxes, "is the right place for this business."

"Weel, sir," continued the lawyer, "about the siller——"

"Gae 'wa' wi' your siller!" exclaimed Hutcheon. "I canna speak o' the siller the now. My heart's sair for my brither. Clever, bonny man that he was! To think that he should ha' gane doon to the grave without a sight o' his ain folk again', or his ain land."

When he said that, his distracted eye, toiling from meagre knowledge of foreign lands to make out the kind of place and the sort of people where Geordie had died, caught sight of the present fact that the boy (Geordie's son, he thought) was regarding him with open-eyed wonder. Then he bethought him of a pressing question to ask, and turned suddenly to the lawyer.

"Is there nothing in the will about a woman, or a woman and a bairn?"

"Nothing, as I understan'," said the lawyer, unable to hide his quickening curiosity. "But had he a woman and bairn dependin' on him?"

"No," answered Hutcheon grimly, "it canna be said he had, and I but asked ye if there be any mention o' the like."

"Weel, sir," said the lawyer, "there can hardly be, or it would ha' been named to me; but we'll be sure o't when Mr. Cochrane sends on to me the copy o' the will that's been sent to him. Now," continued the little man, as if he had at length arrived at the satisfactory point towards which he had been struggling, "will I read ye the haill letter?"

"I thank ye," said Hutcheon with a stately kind of courtesy, "but I canna hear about the siller the now. Moreover, I've no head for business, and I'll be obliged to ye if ye'll lay the haill matter afore Mr. Sharpe. Ye winna tak' that amiss?"

"Na, na," said Mr. Henderson, "Mr. Sharpe's my partic'lar frien'."

"And," added Hutcheon, "he's been the frien' and man

o' law o' my family sin' ever I can mind, and his father was afore him. I thank ye and bid ye good-night. Come awa', Hamish, my mannie."

And the Master with a sweep set his broad bonnet on his head and swung out of the office, followed by the wondering Hamish, and by the little old lawyer to see them to the door.

The Master took the boy's hand and set out on the long walk to Ilkastane. He was hardly conscious of the boy's company, nor did he note, or meditate on, the points of more than local interest that he passed on his way out of the town—the quaint statue of Wallace of Ellerslie in a niche of a wall, and the old house with iron-studded door said to have belonged to Mary Queen o' Scots. His attention was filled with memories of the Chartist days when the young, impatient blood of his brother was stirred with the oppression and distress of the people, and when his fresh, eloquent voice rang out over crowds of dour and ill-clad folk. He thought bitterly of the futility of all those wild hopes and demands (Geordie had died alone in a foreign land, and the folk were as they had been!), and he recalled his brother's parting injunction—"Stick to the Cause!" And he *had* stuck to "The Cause," though he had found he must interpret the phrase in another sense than that in which Geordie had understood it. Chartism, if not a mistake, had been but a passing phase—a very passing and inadequate phase—of the real Cause, which was the prosperity and happiness of the folk—their own folk first, and other folk afterwards if they lay in their way. He would have liked to discuss his new views with Geordie, and to have had the help of Geordie's energy and understanding in the attempt to realise them; but Geordie was dead! And he would never exchange word with him more! He was left alone, the last of his race! No; not the last—there was Hamish.

That thought brought his attention back to the boy, to whom he now felt more strongly drawn than ever. He observed that the boy's steps dragged.

"Are ye tired, my mannie?" asked Hutcheon. "But, of

course, ye maun be tired wi' runnin' about the lee-lang day. Come on my back, laddie."

Hamish permitted himself, without a word, to be raised in the strong arms. It was not the first time he had travelled luxuriously on the Master's back, and he now clung round the Master's neck and soon went to sleep.

Thus burdened, the Master took a new line of thought about his brother. He was troubled and perplexed that Geordie seemed to have made no mention in his will of Kitty; of the boy, of course, there could have been no mention, though he must have known, or, at least, have guessed. Geordie had been wont to be considerate and honourable in all things, yet here was complete forgetfulness or neglect of an obvious duty. The Master emerged from his perplexity with but one conclusion—that, except what was due to himself for furnishing forth his brother seven years ago, the property of Geordie rightfully belonged to Hamish and should be laid out in trust for him—for him and "The Cause." That gave him a new and heavier sense of responsibility. He must, he felt, act as the boy's principal protector; he must draw him nearer to himself, not only because he was Geordie's child, but because he was, after himself, the sole remaining representative of the Hutcheon family. He even thought it would be only right to call the boy by the family name; and he must see that he was educated in a manner befitting his position and prospects.

Thus, as he went home to Ilkastane by the lower road from Inverdoon, through a poor, densely-peopled region, for a great part of the way, every feature—the "nether" burn shrunk into the middle of its dirty, desolate bed silently hurrying on in its filth and shame to the harbour, the gross-smelling brewery and the deserted saw-mill, the tannery, whose drying-loft with its sheep-skins seen through the open grate-work hanging white and ghost-like would have made Hamish afraid had he been awake, and the Hangman's Brae, where the Chartists had once resisted the military—all reminded him of his brother or of "The Cause," and the Master's attention was tossed between the past and the future, between memory and anticipation, between the

things that had been attempted and that had failed and the things that were still to do and that must be made to succeed.

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOW THE MASTER TALKED AND O'RHEA SNIGGERED.

THE Master's attention had thus been so much abroad that he had forgotten O'Rhea until he was in the close and approaching his own door.

"My certy!" he said to himself. "And he's been locked in all this while!"

He then hastened his steps with the anticipation of talking freely over his own and his brother's friend the strange and grievous news he had received. He found the key of the door where he had placed it—under the bass, or mat—and when he opened the door he discovered O'Rhea, with his arms spread on the table and his chin set in his hands, gazing at the lowering fire.

"Sitting your lone in the dark!" exclaimed the Master, striding forward to light a candle. "But there's no call for that, man. I'm not so poor but I can aye afford a light to lighten the face o' a friend."

"It is quite right, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, sitting up; "it is quite right, my boy. I've been thinking in the dark—I can think better in the dark—I've been thinking of that invention, that 'Whamleerie' of yours, man."

"And what o't, Fergus?" said the Master, lighting the second candle, and turning his eyes on O'Rhea, who blinked in the sudden brilliance.

"Hallo!" said O'Rhea, discovering Hamish. "You've found the truant, then?—And whaur hae ye been a' the day, bonnie laddie, Hieland laddie?" demanded he of Hamish, with a laugh.

"Like Sawtan," answered the Master for Hamish, "he's

been going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down in it. But come, Hamish, my mannie, ye'd better have a piece and go ben to your bed; it's time for all bairns to be bedded, and the morn's the Sawbath, when it behoves all right-minded folk to be waking betimes. Ye can bide wi' me the night, and I'll go and tell your grannie that ye're found."

So Hutcheon set before Hamish a piece of oat-cake and a sup of skim milk, and then turned to go in to the M'Crees.

"I'll be back in a blink," said he to O'Rhea.

O'Rhea leaned forward, his elbow on his knees, and looked thoughtfully and tenderly at the boy—his own boy eating his supper. He stroked the boy's tousled yellow hair, and felt the stoutness of his arm and the plumpness of his calf.

"Dinna!" laughed Hamish. "Ye kittle\* me."

"You're a fine loon for your age," said O'Rhea.

"A'body says that," retorted Hamish wearily, while he wondered anew at the red hair and freckles of the man's hand, and the scars with which it was scored and jagged.

"I see," sniggered O'Rhea; "and so ye've been trying to justify your character by wandering off to see the world?"

Hamish nodded with his mouth full.

"And what did you see?" demanded O'Rhea.

"I saw the sodgers come hame frae Rooshia, and Donald M'Kay was ane o' them. He'll be hame in a minute, when he's had his *doch-an-something*."

"Oh, he will, will he?" said O'Rhea. "And did Hutcheon see the returned warrior?"

"He found me wi' them i' the barracks," answered Hamish.

"In the barracks!" exclaimed O'Rhea, with a laugh. "Did you want to be a soldier?"

"Ay," said Hamish, "I'd like fine to be a man o' the sword and aye wear a feather bonnet."

"A man of the sword?" laughed O'Rhea. "But where did you get those fine words, my boy?"

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\* Tickle.

"The Maister tauld me them. He said my forefathers were a' men o' the sword."

"Oh, he said that, did he?" sniggered O'Rhea. "I suppose he ought to know, eh? And what more did he say?"

"He bought me this book," said Hamish, revealing the *Robinson Crusoe*, upon which he sat for secrecy and security.

"This cost a good deal, didn't it?" said O'Rhea, handling the book and opening it.

"Ay. Half-a-crown," answered Hamish.

"It's a wonder he could afford so much," said O'Rhea. "He says he has no wealth o' siller."

"Ay," said Hamish, "that was afore. But he'll be rich now."

"What's that?" asked O'Rhea with so sudden a grating of his voice, and with such a bang in the closing of the book, that Hamish started with fright. "What do you mean by 'rich now,' my boy?"

"I dinna ken," said Hamish, "but I heard the advocate tell him."

"Advocate?—what advocate?" demanded O'Rhea.

"Round by the Court House, where we ga'ed in though the auld wife didna want to let us in."

"Never mind the auld wife. What did the advocate say? What did he say?" insisted O'Rhea with savage hurry, for he heard Hutcheon's step approaching.

"He said his brither was dead," began Hamish, almost whimpering under such ferocious questioning.

"Whose brother, idiot?" demanded O'Rhea. "Whose brother, my boy?"

"The Maister's," answered Hamish, with half a mind to cry. "And there's a hantle o' siller in Calcutta;—I heard him say Calcutta: and I ken whaur Calcutta is!"

"So it's come at last!" muttered O'Rhea, smiting his knee with his scarred and hairy hand. "All right, Hamish, my boy," he added soothingly, stroking the tousled hair again, "it's all right. Don't cry. You're a good boy—a capital boy. Remind me to give you a penny to-morrow;" and with that the Master entered.

"No through your piece yet?" exclaimed he to Hamish. "Drink up your milk, and take your piece wi' ye, and run awa' to bed, my mannie. It's time all little loons were sleepin'."

So Hamish rose and went "ben" to the Master's sleeping-room, with the remains of his piece in the one hand, and his *Robinson Crusoe* in the other, to put under his pillow and dream of.

"Well, now, Fergus," said the Master, "I think we might have our bit supper. And we'll have out the grey-beard from the press, for we've need of comfort this night, and I must have a wet whistle. I've a hantle to speak of. But tell me first what ye were thinkin' of the 'Whamleerie,' because I've been thinkin' o't too."

O'Rhea sharply considered the Master as he put supper on the table. He clearly and swiftly came to the conclusion that he would not say such things concerning the Master's invention as he had intended.

"Hutcheon, my boy," said he, in his frankest, most jovial manner, "you must let your 'Whamleerie' slide. Give it to the weavers, of course—there's no harm in that—but have nothing more to do with it. It's not fitting that a man of your position should be identified with such a thing."

The Master sat down slowly and considered O'Rhea's words. Then he turned his clear eyes on him.

"I'm not sure, Fergus," said he, "that I ken what ye would be at."

"Look here, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, "you're an aristocrat—you're the Master of Hutcheon—you're one of the *noblesse*, as the Bailie said to me last night."

"The Bailie said that?" asked Hutcheon. "But how came the Bailie to speak of me?"

"We spoke of you," said O'Rhea, "in speaking of me. You've made a great impression on the Bailie," he sniggered. "He thinks you a great person, a very great person, in disguise, and I did what little I could to deepen the impression. So—so you see, Hutcheon, you must do nothing to spoil the impression, and you would if you began to traffic in wham-

leeries, and if it were known that you had made them with you own hands."

"It does not matter to me the twirl of a teetotum," said the Master, "what a creature like the Bailie may think of my doings; and I wonder, Fergus, that ye should suppose that it does. And I am not sure that I like your speaking of me wi' the Bailie."

"Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, slapping his hand on the table, "mark my words. You'll have to let the 'Whamleerie' go; it's not for you, the Master, to potter with. You're going to be great, great enough for a dozen men like me or the Bailie to walk between your legs, and you should do nothing that'll disgrace your greatness."

"Hoity-toity!" exclaimed Hutcheon. "Me and my greatness! I'll be none the bigger in truth for swelling myself wi' pride! The pride of my house had a fall like Sawtan's when my forebear came to Ilkastane; it's never got up again, and I'm not the man to withdraw my hand through pride from what I have once put it to! I'll go through what I intended wi' the 'Whamleerie.' Hear me out, Fergus," said he, raising his hand lightly to silence his impulsive friend. "I'll go through wi' the 'Whamleerie,' but I'll do more because now I have the means. That's what I've got to tell ye o'."

"Oh, what's that?" exclaimed O'Rhea, with interest of a well-feigned newness.

"Fergus," said the Master, "Geordie's dead."

"What?" said O'Rhea. "But how do you know?"

"I chanced upon Henderson the advocate when I was in the town looking for Hamish, and he told me he had a letter from some writer bodies in Edinburgh that he wanted to read to me. I could not bide, but I said I'd call in a while; and when I'd found the laddie, in I went and heard the letter."

Then he recounted the contents of the letter, with the comments and explanations of the advocate, mentioning vaguely that the money—a great sum—lay at Calcutta; and all the while O'Rhea listened with greedy eyes and ears.



"How much?" asked O'Rhea abruptly, when the fortune was named.

"Twenty thousand pounds," answered the Master.

"Is that all?" exclaimed O'Rhea. "It should be more! —much more!"

The Master gazed at him in surprise, and the direct gaze seemed to disturb O'Rhea, who flicked his fingers and said hurriedly:

"I mean, George should have made more than that."

"It seems to me," said the Master obstinately, "a gey hantle o' siller; and it'll take a hantle o' spending."

"Right for you, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea promptly, "right; but all the same, George should have got more out of the King of Oudh than that! But there you are. What did I tell you the other day? and what did I say a minute ago? Rich and great, Hutcheon, my boy. Now you can take your proper place, with a proper bearing. Now you can swagger up and down, with a new coat on your back and a cane in your hand and siller in your pouch, like any lord or master of them all."

The Master considered him again in surprise; but O'Rhea endured the gaze, and returned it with the frankest, friendliest openness.

"But I have no mind," said the Master, "to do anything of the kind, Fergus. Ye mistake me sorely gin ye think I have the smallest liking for busking myself out wi' braws, and swaggerin' on the causey like the birkies I have seen here and in Edinburgh. No, man; I'll be grand my own gate. Ye don't object to that, I reckon?"

"Not at all, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea promptly, "not at all. It has nothing to do with me, of course."

"But it *has* to do wi' you, Fergus!" exclaimed Hutcheon with an emphatic and explanatory sweep of his hand. "Ye're bound by your auld oath, and ye're bound as Geordie's friend, to help me wi' your counsel to carry out the 'Cause.'"

"The Cause!" cried O'Rhea. "What Cause? There is no Cause now!"

"There's the old Cause in a new and better shape, as I

have told ye, Fergus. And ye've got just to do what ye can to help me carry it through."

"Suppose I say," exclaimed O'Rhea, red and bristling, "that you and the Cause may go to the muckle black de'il? What then?"

"Then," said the Master solemnly, "ye're a man forsworn, and a faithless comrade!"

"Hold hard! Wait a bit!"

O'Rhea rose and strode up and down, rumpling his hair and feeling for his beard, and all the floor shook under his heavy tread, while the Master quietly observed him and crunched his oatcake and butter. At length O'Rhea flung himself again into his seat, nuzzled and snuggled his face into his big hairy freckled bands, and sniggered, sniggered, a good while.

"All right, Hutcheon, my boy," said he at last, "you'll not find me wanting, by G—d! No one shall ever say that Fergus O'Rhea failed as a friend, or failed in his oath! But what's your game? You must tell me that. How do you propose to see your Cause through?"

"Now," said the Master, opening the grey-beard, "that's what I call something like! Have a drop before we begin." O'Rhea mixed his drop, and the Master went on. "First and foremost the laddie must be provided for, though Geordie, it appears, has made no mention of him."

"The laddie?" asked O'Rhea, pausing with his glass at his lips.

"Hamish," answered the Master. "Ye ken what I mean?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure!" said O'Rhea; but he set his glass down, again put his face in his hands, and again sniggered.

"It amuses ye," said the Master with a dark frown.

"It does, Hutcheon, it does," said O'Rhea. "You must excuse me. But certainly Hamish, poor loon, must be provided for. Get him new clothes, first of all, and send him to a good school; the rest of his fortune can wait. What about other things?"

"Next comes the 'Whamleerie,'" said the Master, with his eye steadily fixed on O'Rhea.

"Very well, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, and sniggered again, "the 'Whamleerie' be it."

"Now that I have the means," said the Master, "I think I'll take your advice and patent it."

"First be sure," said O'Rhea, as with great seriousness, "that you have it all fit, and perfect and complete, wanting nothing for smooth working. Well, Hutcheon, on you go: what next?"

"Well, Fergus," said Hutcheon, "there I'm stickit. After the 'Whamleerie' I see nothing clear; and it's there I want your advice."

"I can be liberal with advice," said O'Rhea. "I've nothing else I can be liberal with. Oh, dear! dear!" he exclaimed, and laid his head down and sniggered again.

"I just stick," said the Master, "to the general notion of getting the folk set free from all outside interference and oppression of bailies and such-like, and keepin' them busy round myself in comfort and obedience."

"You mean," said O'Rhea, with a loud te-hee, "all the lean, lank, starved and creeshie weavers o' Ilkastane?"

"I mean," said the Master, "them, old and young, that are the bairns of them that aye stood by my forebears in life and in death! And I'll allow no man to speak ill words or ill-faured words about them in my hearing!—no man, Fergus!"

The Master rose and stood with gathered brows and his hands clasped at his back, and looked steadily at the Irishman, who quickly caught the look and its dangerous meaning. With a scarcely perceptible shrug of his heavy shoulders he hitched himself straight in his seat, and shook himself into his openest and most jovial appearance.

"I'm wrong, Hutcheon," said he, with a burst of his most taking frankness. "I ask your pardon. I'm out of sorts. I'm in one of my nasty moods, when I must laugh at everything, for no reason in the world, my boy, no reason at all! It's just a fit I have."

"Theu," said the Master, "we'd better speak of this no more the night."

"No more to-night, that's the thing," said O'Rhea. "And I think I'll go to bed; I'm dog-tired."

## CHAPTER XII.

### A BROKEN SABBATH.

HAMISH could not sleep. His day's adventures, the *Robinson Crusoe* under his pillow, with its coloured pictures of Robin's parrot, Robin's self, and Man Friday, and the footprint, and the savages dancing round the fire—these, and his conversation with O'Rhea, had excited him to an unusual pitch of wakefulness. Above all he had been moved by the last thing; the ugly, hairy hand of O'Rhea, his furious eye and tone, his bristling red hair, and his thick, scornful lips had shaken him with such nameless fears as he had never before known, and he lay broad awake, and shivered in the little trestle bed under the open tiles of the sloping roof.

He was still awake when O'Rhea entered. The big Irishman, being a kind of honoured guest, occupied the box-bed on the other side of the garret from Hamish's, the Master's being a shake-down at right angles between the two. Hamish lay and watched O'Rhea undress without a candle. Enough light came through the unblinded window in the roof. He was very leisurely about the business. He took off his coat, and sat on the edge of the bed and nursed his knee in meditation. Then he ferociously rubbed his cold shirt-sleeves, and chuckled and laughed with such extreme enjoyment that he exclaimed to himself, "Oh, dear! dear!" It seemed to Hamish that O'Rhea's laugh was too small for his size, but yet it frightened him, and he lay still and watched; but there was nothing more to note then, for

O'Rhea finished undressing and disappeared in the box-bed. Presently the Master also came to bed, and then Hamish slept. But some time in the night he woke with a start, and sat up. The moon was shining brightly through the skylight, shedding its soft, silvery sheen on the Master asleep on the floor, and just touching, as if scornfully, the end of the box-bed, from which O'Rhea leaned and sniggered. Hamish could see him plainly, though he himself was unseen—see and wonder at his great, hairy chest (for O'Rhea's shirt was open), and hear him laugh and mutter while he kept his eyes on the form of the Master illumined as with a heavenly glory. Hamish could hardly believe his ears that the big man was uttering such bairn's rhymes and tags as certainly sounded across the garret.

“‘Nievey-nievey, nick-nack,’ Hutcheon,” said he, “‘which hand will ye tak’?’” And then, “‘Wholes, halves, quarters, inches, all my own,’ eh, Hutcheon? Oh, Master of Hutcheon, you blind-eyed Bartimeus!”

And still he leaned on his elbow and laughed low, with his head turned and his eyes on Hutcheon. But suddenly he looked round, bent his brows, and peered through the illuminated space into the darkness, out of which rose Hamish's white face.

“What!” he whispered across the gulf of light, “sitting up awake? By Gor! You'd better lie down and be off into the land of Nod this minute!”

And he disappeared again into the box-bed, and Hamish lay down and slipped away into the land of Nod, where he saw hairy warlocks and sniggering bogles, and where he wandered in terror until morning.

All three were up betimes, for the Master was an early riser. Porridge was quickly made; the fire in the other room had been kept alive all night by a block of peat, and a puff or two of the bellows set it in a blaze. When breakfast was over, the Master set off into the town in his best coat and broad bonnet to attend the early service of his own peculiar church; for though he had little to say of religion, he was a devout man.

Then the great O'Rhea sat down to have a talk with the

insignificant Hamish ; and it was curious to note how the man addressed the boy, as if he had years as well as discretion, being impressed, as all were, by his shrewd eye and considerable stature.

"I promised you a penny, didn't I?" began O'Rhea, fingering in his pockets.

"Ay," answered Hamish.

"Well," said O'Rhea, "I'll be better than my word; there's sixpence for you. But we'll put it there"—and he set it on the table between them—"until we've had some conversation. But this is Sabbath morning and I'm going to put you through your carritches first. What's my name?"

"Fergus O'Rhea," answered Hamish. "I'll spell it if ye like," he added, with a covetous eye on the sixpence, which, he conceived, was the more likely to be his the more display he made of the calisthenics of school-learning.

"I'll do without the spelling," said O'Rhea. "And from this moment, my boy, never let my name pass your lips until I give you leave."

"But I maun ca' you something when I speak to ye," urged Hamish.

"I suppose you must," said O'Rhea. "Well, now, you've read, I suppose, of the giant that said, 'Fe, fa, fo, fum!' You know him, don't you? Well, I'll be 'Fo.' That's all I permit. And if ever you use my own proper name!—you know the effect of swearing, and of taking names in vain? Well, that's what'll happen to you. 'Thou shalt not take'—you know what—'name in vain.'"

"For," began Hamish, to continue the quotation.

"You have it, my boy," said O'Rhea; "that's quite good enough. Now what's *your* name?"

"Hamish M'Cree."

"Nothing of the sort!" exclaimed O'Rhea. "M'Cree's not your name."

"I ha'e nae ither," answered Hamish.

"No, poor little beggar, you haven't!" exclaimed O'Rhea. "By Gor! you haven't! But you shall have more than a name, or mine isn't F. O.! You shall have rings on your

fingers, and bells on your toes! Here! Take up the sixpence! It's yours! You're a good boy! A capital boy!" and he leaned over the table and stroked the boy's hair with his hairy scarred hand, and pinched the boy's ear between his rough forefinger and thumb. "You're a clever boy, and I trust you. I have wonderful things I could tell you, as wonderful as any in your *Robinson Crusoe*, but if ever you speak of me to anybody, particularly to the M'Crees—to your mother or any of them—if ever you tell again to anybody what you hear me say—— By-the-bye, you were awake in the night; did you hear me say anything?"

"'Nievey-nievey, nick-nack,'" laughed Hamish.

"When I said that I had a fit," said O'Rhea, "and I don't like it to be known. So don't you repeat it to anybody—not to the Master or anybody, mind. For if ye do, never shall you hear any wonderful stories from me! And if ye do—well, when I'm in a fit I find out all the people that don't do as I ask them, and I bang them with a club when they're in bed, as the giant did in the story-book."

At that Hamish looked very frightened, but O'Rhea reassured and soothed him, and declared that there was absolutely no danger if he were a good boy and held his tongue.

"You stick to me, my boy," said O'Rhea finally, "and you'll be all right;" and though Hamish did not see how it could be all wrong if he did not stick to him—whatever that might mean—he yet thought it was very kind of F. O. to say so.

Presently O'Rhea, after pacing up and down the floor some time, told Hamish that early in the afternoon, when all the folk would be sitting at their Sabbath broth, and the loan would be clear, he was going to visit Bailie Lepine, and that he might go with him.

"And young Master Lepine," said Hamish, "promised to lend me a book."

"Oh, he did, did he?" said O'Rhea. "That's all the better."

Then Hamish ran off home to the M'Crees to be arrayed in his Sabbath best, and the big Irishman was left alone.

He continued to pace the room, smiling and rubbing his hands. He was evidently at peace with himself; but that his thoughts were not of the Sabbath order was plain from some of the phrases he muttered to himself.

"Smart's the word, Fergus. . . . It'll go hard if I can't manage that soft-hearted Hutcheon with his whamleeries and fiddle-faddles. And, by Gor! the money's as much mine as his! But first that whamleerie nonsense must be choked off."

He raised his eyes to the great skylight over the Master's carpenter's bench, and noted the bright blue of the Sabbath morning. A desire to see the outer world took him, and to inhale the fresh air. He climbed upon the bench, opened the skylight, and put out his head. He had a view over the kail and potato patches that lay behind the houses of the loan. Almost immediately beneath him a man in his clean Sabbath shirt-sleeves was walking with decorum up and down in the sun. It was Tamson enjoying the prospect of his small domain and his piggery. A daring idea took hold of O'Rhea. He glanced all around; no other being than Tamson was visible, and he knew enough of the population of Ilkastane to be certain they were like other working populations who lie abed on Sabbath morning to make up for their early rising on the other days of the week. He was satisfied he could do what he wished to do without being observed.

"Hi, Tamson!" he called. Tamson twirled his eye round and up, and discovered him. "Wait a moment."

He jumped from the carpenter's bench, found a slip of paper, and wrote on it in pencil, sniggering all the while, "Take this and make a kirk and a mill o't. Get the Bailie to help you to take out a patent. At once, or you will be too late." Then he took one of the completed whamleeries, tied the paper to it, and rose again upon the bench. He looked round to see that no eye but Tamson's was on him, and then he swung the "Whamleerie" out.

"Catch!" he called, and flung.

Tamson caught the thing, and untied and read the paper.



"I understan'," called Tamson; "fine, that," and he nodded, and went quickly into his house.

The Maister returned in the middle of the morning, and having set his frugal dinner on the fire, he left O'Rhea to look after it while he himself went into M'Cree's to set forth his intentions towards Hamish. He found the women of the household in trouble. Kitty was not there. She always kept herself secluded in her garret, with her wandering fancies and memories hanging about her like the lint-white dust of her winding-wheel; but Eppie M'Cree sat by the fire with her younger daughter Elsie. It was plain whence Elsie derived her good looks; for her mother, though wrinkled and smoke-dried, gave evidence of having been handsome. Her form was still erect, her hair was black, and her eyes were bright. Eppie sat with her arms folded, gazing at the fire, on which the family broth was boiling, while Elsie stood with one white, plump hand resting on the mantel-piece, and with the other softly wiping her eyes.

"Ow, greetin', Elsie!" exclaimed the Master. "What's gone wrong?"

"A's gane wrang, Jeems," answered her mother, without looking up.

"*Bu-h!*" called M'Cree from the other room, where he sat with his newspaper. "Is that you, Hutcheon? Come ben and let me read to ye a gran' bit o' writin' here about your money-ocrasies, and your arist-ocrasies, and your Royal Fem'lies."

"Hoot, Saunders!" called his wife, "dinna fash the Maister wi' your balderdash. If ye maun break the Sawbath wi' your *Reynold's*, dinna tempt others to do the like. Ye can just steek the door upo' yoursel' and haud your havers."

"Man," said M'Cree, coming forward in spite of his wife's prohibition, with his brass-rimmed spectacles slipping over the hump of his Roman nose, "there's just a gran' strike gaun on in Brummagem! *Bu-h!* Listen!"

"Gae 'wa' wi' ye and your strikes!" exclaimed Eppie, rising and pushing him ben again. "It would set ye better, ye auld sinner, to be reading a chapter o' First Corinthians!" and she pushed him in and shut the door, for M'Cree,

like many another great man, was in subjection to his wife. "What," said she, as she returned to the fire, "wi' a haverin' man and doited dochters, I ha'e nae peace o' my life!"

"Hoot, Eppie," said the Master gently, "I'm sure ye ha'e no cause to ca' Elsie names and gar her greet."

"It's no me gars her greet," answered Eppie, "but her ain fause heart!"

"My heart's no fause, mither," protested Elsie, "and *He's* no fause."

"Ay, *He!*" said Eppie. "Just hearken to her! Of course, she maun let a' the warld ken there's a *him* in't! I'm sure, what the Lord gi'ed me weel-faur'd bairns for I kenna! I'm no swearin', Jeems! Dinna think it; for de'il a swear ha'e I in me! There's Kirsty Kyle and her dochters—hard-workin', sonsy bodies—there's no *He* hangin' about them, and nae clash-pyot tongues waggin' about them!"

"They'd like fine if there was, though!" exclaimed Elsie.

"Weel," said her mother, "I'll aye say there's nae satisfaction in havin' bonnie dochters just to be steered about by men without bein' married!"

"He wants to marry me, mither," said Elsie, crying again. "I've tauld ye twenty times!"

"Ay!" exclaimed Eppie again, hugging herself with her crossed arms. "I think I see him! Na, na! Catch him! Gentry dinna marry mill-queans like you, my lass! They may gi'e ye rings and braws, but they look for the change o't! What ha'e ye gi'en him for that ring, ye limmer?"

"I've gi'en him naething, mither!—naething!" protested Elsie.

"He's gi'en her a ring!" exclaimed Eppie to Hutcheon. "Just gi'e the Maister a look o't! No muckle worth, I reckon! Just a bit glass and gilded brass, I daursay! It's no a' gowd that glisters, my lass!"

Elsie took from her pocket the ring and gave it to Hutcheon without looking round.

"It's a braw ring," said the Master. "Gold and diamonds. "It maun ha'e cost a hantle o' siller."

"D'ye think sae, Jeems?" said Eppie, somewhat appeased.

"Wha is this *He* that gave ye't, Elsie, my dawtie?" asked Hutcheon gently. "Ye dinna mind telling me?"

"Ow, wha ither," exclaimed her mother, "but young Mr. Lippen, the Bailie's son and heir!"

"The Bailie's son!" exclaimed the Master.

"Ay, just that," answered Eppie. "He's a well-faur'd young man enough, and a genteel; but it would be better for the lassie to tak' walks wi' a creeshie weaver than wi' him."

"Dinna owerstep it, Eppie," said Hutcheon. "Hot blood hankers for hot blood, and braw looks attract braw looks."

"Ay," said Eppie, "and when the t'ane has got t'ither? Ye ken fine that as the sow fills the draff sours. He'll play at honey-pots wi' her the day, and at the week's end he'll be fair scunnered o' her."

"Hoot-toot, Eppie," said Hutcheon. "The Bailie's son mayna be a canny lad, but he may mean no harm for a' that."

"He'll do me nae harm, Maister Hutcheon!" said Elsie. "Mony and mony a time he's tauld me that he would na let a flee light on me. Ow, I ken what ye mean. But he loves me ower weel to let me be joket or made a byword o'."

"I think, Elsie, my lass," said Hutcheon, "there would be less harm if I were to gang and ha'e a crack wi' him, for I daursay the lad wouldna wrong ye."

"I wish ye would, Jeems," answered Eppie immediately for her daughter. "For Saunders, though he pretends he caresna for the Bailie, is as feared o' him as o' a bogle."

"But what say ye, Elsie, lass?" said Hutcheon to the girl, drawing himself up, and looking at her with an air as if he would say, "If this lad were not before me I might admire you myself." "Shall I gang to him, or shall I no gang?"

"Maister Hutcheon," said Elsie, and she turned round and looked at him with a frank sweetness, "I canna misdoubt ye, for your kindness is kenned by a'boddy. Gang if it seems good to ye; but dinna gang frae me, because I can

nae mair misdoubt George than I can misdoubt yoursel'. It's only wi' great a-do I hae been able to keep him frae trying to mak' a leddy o' me."

"It's no silks and satins and braws that mak' a leddy, my dawtie," said the Master, with the gentle, firm conviction of one who knew. "A leal heart's mair than birth and braws, though, and ye ha'e that. I'll gang and ha'e a crack wi' him this afternoon, and ye'd better get ye ready for the kirk, for ye ha'e missed the forenoon diet a'thegither."

"Ay," said Eppie, "as I've been telling her, the Communion's coming on, and if she's no seen at the kirk oftener the minister'll no be givin' her the token, and that wad be a fine thing for folk to cast up that she had missed the Tables."

"I'm thinking, Eppie," said the Master, "that it's mony a year since ye sat down to the Tables yoursel'."

"It is that, Jeems," said Eppie, "but the Lord canna expect muckle o' a wearifu' auld wife like me. It's the young folk He likes to get hand o', as I understan'. 'Gi'e me thy heart,' says He; and an auld wife like me has nae heart left. Mair over, I ha'e nae claithe fit to sit down at the Table o' the Lord."

"Gin I buy ye a silk gown by neist Sabbath, Eppie," said the Master with a smile, "do ye think ye could manage to get out to the kirk?"

"Hoot, Jeems," said Eppie, "I wouldna impose on ye to do sic a thing, an' silk would be ower braw for me, and it would rin awa' wi' a hantle o' siller."

"I can afford it, Eppie," said he, "and ye shall have it, for my poor brother Geordie has left me a hantle o' siller, as I ha'e told ye."

"Aweel, Jeems," said Eppie, "gin ye maun, ye will. But nae silks for me; I ha'e seen in my ain family what the pride o' braws brings ye till; ye'll just hain the siller, Jeems, and get me a gown o' merino, and ye'll put on till't a dacent shawl and a bit o' a bonnet, no ower gran', but wi' a curtain and a red flower, 'cause I'm black mysel'."

"It shall be as ye say, Eppie," answered the Master, "even to the curtain and the red flower. But there's another

thing. I want ye to let me ha'e the whole charge o' Hamish. He'll bide wi' me, and I'll put him to a good school, and from that he can go to the Grammar School, and syne to College. He deserves it, the laddie; ye ken what I mean; he has no father, and I maun be a father to him. We maun speak more o' this, Eppie, another time."

"A father to the fatherless. Ay, Jeems," murmured Eppie, "ye canna do mair, and ye canna do less."

### CHAPTER XIII.

AIMÉE.

So it came to pass that there was a considerable concourse at Bailie Lepine's house that afternoon. O'Rhea hurried through his dinner that he might pass down the loan while the doorsteps and the mouths of the closes were clear of gossips. Arrayed in a blue coat and a broad bonnet of the Master's, he set out with Hamish in his Sunday best.

In a very little while they were out of the loan without being observed (so far as they knew), and pacing along the Burnside to Corbie Ha'. There was a pleasant appearance of a long succession of Sabbaths about the entrance to the Bailie's home. Several fine trees, just beginning to be sprinkled with the green of spring, cast their shadows over the gates, and under them and on all quiet corners and joints of the stone-work a tranquil green mould had settled, clinging with especial affection to the stone leopards rampant on either side of the gateway. The great iron gates never seemed to be opened, and grass, thick enough to be almost called turf, grew boldly in the gravel, without dread of wheels or horses' hoofs, or even of gardener's hoe. The narrow side-gate, or postern, by which O'Rhea entered, alone showed signs of use.

"Bide you here," said O'Rhea to Hamish, when they had

passed within the gate, "and watch the birds, till I see if the Bailie is in a good humour, and if your friend, young Mr. Lepine, is in."

And Hamish was left standing under a sombre fir, listening to the shrill chirp of the sparrows busy with their nest-building, and the soft, confidential caw of the rooks similarly engaged in the tops of the elms. He stood thus listening and waiting, and imagining the noble rooms of Corbie Ha' and the palatial staircase down which he had seen a fairy princess descending, when on chancing to turn his head to follow the flight of a sparrow he discovered a young lady, with a wide flapping hat on her head—his very princess, he believed!—observing him from behind a laurel bush. Perceiving she was discovered, the young lady came forward with a glorious smile that lit up her countenance and made her seem still more of a fairy princess than before. She spoke, and how soft and sweet her voice was!—like that of the great flute the Master cherished, and on which he sometimes, but very rarely, made discourse a sad Scots air.

"Are you waiting for your father?" she asked.

"Yon," said Hamish, pointing after O'Rhea, "is no my father. Yon," he continued, "is O'Rhea," he was going to say, but remembering the secrecy enjoined upon him by that terrible person, he said, "yon's F. O.—Fo."

"Fo," she laughed. "That is no name. You are a droll boy. Let us walk this way, and we shall easily see your *Fo* when he goes out," and laughing again—a fresh ripple of a laugh that made Hamish desire to laugh too—she took his hand.

How different her little white hand felt from any hand Hamish had ever held before, and how broad and coarse his speech sounded compared with hers!

"Do you go to school?" she asked, with a smile which showed her small, white, even teeth.

"Ay," answered Hamish, "I gang to the school;" and then he was ashamed again of his Scottish speech. "I learn Grammar and G'ography now," he added, attempting to say the words English-wise.

"You know where Paris is, then—and Edinburgh?" she said. "I have been to school in Paris and in Edinburgh, and now I have come home, not to go to school any more. I have been away a long, long time at school. If I had not been away so long at school I might have talked like you. I ought to talk like you, because I'm a Scots lass—at least, half a Scots lass."

Her eyes were bright, and her countenance shone with her wonderful smile.

"Ye're no a *lass*," said Hamish, "ye're a *leddy*; and ye speak finer than we speak."

"You're a droll boy," said she, with another merry ripple of laughter. She led him by the hand away over the turf, in and out among the trees, and asked him his name and his age, and was surprised, as all were, that he was so young. "You are a very nice, droll boy," she repeated.

"They ca' me auld-farrant," said he, with a sad smile, which made her laugh still more, so that he became bolder, and laughed too, and ventured to raise his eyes to look at her. But when she stooped and kissed him he was ashamed, he knew not why, and did not dare to look at her again except when she was not looking at him. At length he had looked his fill, and yet he would have found it hard to say what she was like, except that she had dark red curls under her hat, bright eyes that seemed now brown and now a golden yellow, and a red, laughing mouth with white teeth; for little boys like Hamish see in women only the angel face shining upon them, like the cherub heads that hover about the Holy Babe in old pictures.

"What's *your* name?" he was at length bold enough to ask.

"Aimée Lepine," she answered, and spelt for him her Christian name. "Do you like it?"

"I like it fine," said he.

"But," she asked suddenly, looking out towards the avenue of approach to the house, "who is this big man with a bundle in his hand?"

"Yon," said Hamish, "is Hew Tamson, that keeps the pigs."

"But surely," she laughed, "he does not take a pig—not even a little pig—to my father to-day?"

And at that Hamish laughed too.

"And," said she a moment later, "here is another great man—a handsome man with a red beard! Is everybody coming to see my father to-day? Who is he?"

"Oh," said Hamish, "yon's the Maister."

"The Master! Master of whom? master of what?"

Then Hamish began to pour out all he knew and felt about the Master's greatness and goodness, about his cleverness and his wealth; and Aimée Lepine listened at first with smiling curiosity and then with serious interest, until she had made quite a romantic and princely figure out of the Master's presentment as set before her by the boy.

In the meantime the Master followed Tamson into the house, for the same reason that the King followed the old woman—because, that is, the old woman went before—and when he was admitted into the hall he saw Tamson waiting with a bundle under his arm, without suspecting what the bundle contained.

"What, Hew," was all he said, pointing to the bundle with his knotty staff, "ha'e ye come trocking on the Sabbath day?"

"Weel, Hutcheon," answered Tamson, in a voice that sounded as well sanded as his wife's floor, "no just a'thegither trocking; but, whatever, 'the better the day the better the deed.'" But he shifted his bundle under the other arm, and furtively watched the Master with his red piggish eyes.

"Ay, Hew, but ye didna learn that from your mither, or the minister," said the Master.

"Maybe no, Hutcheon—maybe no," answered Tamson. "But neither my mither nor the minister kenned a'thing. And I ha'e learned frae the Bible mysel' that the Sabbath was made for man, and no man for the Sabbath; it's a pity to be ower muckle fashed wi' times and seasons. There's naething wrang, I believe, in learning that frae the Bible itsel'; and Paul himsel' says, 'Be not righteous overmuch.'"

"Does Paul say that, Hew?" said the Master. "It doesna



sound like him. But ye ken, Hew, it's said the de'il himsel' can give ye screeds o' Scripture for his own ends."

"Sae I've heard said, but some folk mak' gey free wi' the de'il. And after a', Hutcheon, what are ye doing here yoursel'?" asked Hew, with a grin, and something of a snarl.

"I'm here on a work o' charity and mercy, Hew," answered the Master, "and ye ken that's lawful on the Sabbath day."

"Mister George, sir," said Jaques, shuffling up to Hutcheon, "will see you, if it please you to com' this way."

So Hutcheon left Tamson waiting to interview the Bailie, while himself went on serenely after Jaques, suspecting no evil, up the soft-carpeted, broad-stepped stairs into what a young man in these days would call "the den" of young George Lepine. And it was a grievance with the jealous, piggish Tamson that his better had been more promptly received by him whom he had come to seek than he.

Young George had heard enough of the Master of Hutcheon—from his sweetheart and from his father—to render him polite and curious when the great man came seeking an interview. He had expected to be face to face with a rather loud, eccentric person, and he was agreeably surprised to encounter a man who, though large, imposing, and picturesque, was suave and courteously spoken. The Master, on his part, had thought of George Lepine with some prejudice. He had not been able to dissociate him from the Frenchman, his father, the destroyer of the handloom, the oppressor of the weavers; and therefore he had expected to find a young coxcomb who would have to be brought to his senses and made to understand that he was not free, merely for his own amusement and pleasure, to disturb the maiden fancy and happiness of even the humblest daughter of Ilkastane. When he stood before George and looked upon him he saw a well-dressed, good-looking young man, surrounded by books (though the Master was not a bookish man he regarded books with respect), and when he heard George speak he forgot his half-foreign origin, and began to think of him as a douce Scots lad.

"I am pleased to see ye," said George, "for I have often heard of the Master of Hutcheon. Will ye not sit down?"

"It's the Sabbath," said the Master with a light wave of his hand, "but the bit business I ha'e come upon will not wait." He took the seat offered him, and closed his hand on the head of his knotty staff. "It's a private matter concerning yourself and a lassie that is a far-away kind of friend of mine."

"Yes?" said George, with something of a start and an involuntary blush.

"I ken fine," said the Master, "that when a lad and a lass are taken up with one another they just think that nobody kens it but themselves; that's aye the way. They're so taken up, like twa doos on a gable, that they forget altogether their ploys must be seen. It's yoursel' and Elsie M'Cree that I mean by the twa doos. Ye'll not deny that ye ken Elsie?"

"I'll not deny that I ken Elsie—no," answered George.

"And ye'll not deny more than that—that ye have had trysts and walks with her, and that ye have gi'en her a ring?"

George blushed very red; he looked at the Master and shifted in his seat.

"You're asking questions, Mr. Hutcheon," said he, "questions that ye must excuse me if I do not answer just at once. Has Elsie sent ye to me?"

"I see," said the Master. "Ye're in your right to ask for my authority to interfere in other folks' affairs—to hash, maybe, other folks' weft; but I had thought ye kenned me to be the Master o' Hutcheon, with delegate authority to take tent of all that concerns my folk, big or little, young or old. But," said he, pushing that plea aside with a broad sweep of his hand, "I'll not insist on that with ye; I'll but put it to ye that Elsie has no man body to take her part but me. Her father is an orra, blethering kind of creature that nobody minds; so her mother, who has had a hantle of trouble with her daughters, poor body, just asked if I would step round and see ye. And, moreover, Elsie kens I've come. So now, lad, I hope ye see yourself free to speak and answer me."

George muttered that he would be pleased, nay, honoured, to advise with the Master of Hutcheon on the matter of Elsie.

"But," said he, nursing one foot across his knee, and caressing his neat instep, "ye will understand that I am rather shy about discussing things that I had thought were secret betwixt Elsie and myself."

"See what I say!" exclaimed the Master. "A lad thinks that if his wooing is kenned it must have been told! Nobody kens how it's kenned. It's seen. A gliff of the e'e at one time, and not a gliff at another, tells folks what ye're after, till it's common clash that a lad's courting a lass. Just the other day at the dinner-skaling of the mill—deevil take it!—I came upon the mill-queans—the limmers!—taunting Elsie about you and garring her greet!"

"The low, saucy wretches!" exclaimed George.

"Ay, man," said the Master, drawing himself up, "maybe so; but ye see that's what ye ha'e brought on the lassie—flouts and scorning, the like of which a decent lassie cannot bide."

George nursed his foot and looked down, and the Master waited for him to speak.

"You mean," asked George, "that those girls were accusing her of——"

"Ay," answered the Master, "just that, of being your light-a-love. They say that as plain as words can make it. But," he added at once, in answer to George's quick flush of shame and anger, "I would not lightly believe such a thing; though, sorrow to me, I ken ower well when lad and lass are together the young blood runs hot in the veins, and the head often goes."

"Mr. Hutcheon," exclaimed George, "ye will believe me that I had no notion that such things could be said about Elsie, and that I'm not so mean as to take advantage of the ignorance and the innocence of a lassie that loves me well and trusts me fully. Elsie's a noble girl, and we've opened our hearts to one another in all honour and understanding—but no more. Ye believe me?"

George's burst of sincere eloquence had its effect on the Master.

"I believe ye, man, of course," said he. "And it's not to reproach or miscall ye I have come—God forbid!—but to see where we are wi't, and to come to an understanding. The lassie's in an unco position, and things cannot go on as they have been going."

"I know that," answered George readily enough, "and Elsie knows it; but I don't quite know what to do."

"It's as plain as porridge what ye must do, lad. Having gone so far, and made the lassie's good name be called in question, there's but one thing for a lad to do that would wish to behave like a gentleman—he must give the lassie his own name. But," said he, on a sudden touch of suspicion and anger when he saw George doubtfully caressing his instep and writing upon it with his nail, "maybe ye're no thinking of marrying? Maybe ye were only thinking of having a bit fun and daffing?"

"No, no, Mr. Hutcheon," said George promptly, "ye mistake me. Of course I want to marry her; what else should I court her for? But there are difficulties in the way. There's Elsie herself, and there's my father. I doubt my father would be very angry if I went to him this moment and said I wanted to marry Elsie."

"Though," said the Master, bending on him a keen look, "ye're well enough matched, except that ye have some more book learning than Elsie, and a hantle more siller. But your fathers were about even; for if your father has the more siller, he'd have never made it here but for Saunders M'Cree."

"That's quite true, I daresay," answered George, wincing, in spite of his love for Elsie, that his father should be set by the Master on the level of M'Cree. "But yet, sir," he continued, "my father would think that he could not have a mill-girl for a good-daughter."

"And yet," said the Master, "your father biggit the mill that he'd despise her for working in! Well, now," he continued, "I'm free to tell ye at once that I dinna care a but-ton what the Bailie would think! I look upon your father,

lad, as deserving no kindly feelings from me! He's one of they trading and trocking chields that grow fat on the needcessities of poor folk!" and he straightened himself up, with his nose in the air, as if he would strike down the object of his dislike.

"I know," said George, with a sour but deprecatory smile, "that ye think, Mr. Hutcheon, that my father deserves to be hung beside his mill; but ye cannot expect me to think so. My father is my father, and I depend on him and the mill."

"Ay, there it is. Ye'd better be a man and come out o't, and there'd be nothing between you and Elsie but the honest earning of a living."

"That is out of the question, I doubt, Mr. Hutcheon," said George, shrewdly. "Mill work is sure to grow more instead of less, and I can do more good by staying in than by going out."

The Master perceived that that was likely, especially if the young man should marry Elsie. She might help to deliver the folk from their bondage to the Bailie.

"Ye want to marry Elsie, but not at once; that's how I understand ye?" said he.

"That's about it," answered George.

"But that," said the Master, "would just be to leave things as they are, all snorled and ravelled," and he shook his head.

"Please, hear me out, sir," pleaded George. "I don't propose to go on as before."

He explained what we already know, that he had suggested to Elsie that she should leave the mill and put herself to school, so to say. The Master shook his head again, and doubted that Elsie would not like that because of the expense it would entail on her lover; and then George set forth an alternative plan—that Elsie should enter Corbie Ha' as companion to his sister, who had just returned from school, and by contact with her and with such teachers as might be arranged for, be furbished in manners and education, in which way also she would make the acquaintance of the Bailie and win upon him.

"That's a likelier gate than the other," said the Master;

"but ca' canny. Are ye altogether sure of yourself and of Elsie?"

They discussed the matter, and George had no thought of keeping anything back of either his love or his hope from so sympathetic a counsellor as the Master. The Master won his complete confidence; and together they agreed that Elsie, if she were willing, should enter Corbie Ha' as companion to George's sister, and that George, during her probation, should behave as little like her lover as he could find it in him to do. George was delighted that matters had been brought to so pleasant an issue under the auspices of a person whom he could not but regard as armed with authority.

"I'm sure, Mr. Hutcheon," said he effusively, "Elsie and I have to thank ye for your interest in our concerns—have to thank ye very much indeed."

"Say no more, man," said the Master, "say no more. As for Elsie, it's nothing less than my duty, for I reckon myself bound before God Almighty to look after the folk—lads and lassies and a'."

George considered him, and wondered at his earnestness.

"And now," said he, "you must be introduced, Mr. Hutcheon, to my sister, for she'll have to help us in this."

He left the room to find his sister, and returned to say she was somewhere in the garden. Would Mr. Hutcheon go with him to seek her? So together they went out, and came upon Aimée leading Hamish about by the hand, and talking and laughing with him.

"What the sorrow are ye doing here, laddie?" exclaimed the Master when he saw him.

"Oh," exclaimed George, "this is my young friend, who, I remember, promised to come and borrow a book of me to-day."

Then, after having introduced the Master of Hutcheon to his sister, he explained how he had made Hamish's acquaintance. But the Master had no ears for the explanation; he was wholly taken up with the bright and winsome vision of the fairy girl who was so unlike any lass he had ever seen before. And Aimée, on her part, was at once taken with

the tall and serious figure of the great man with the authoritative name and the authoritative look, with his clear grey-blue eyes, his pointed red beard, and his commanding nose that made her think of old pictures she had seen of princes and warriors.

When by-and-by the Master and Hamish went home together, they talked of her, and the Master learned her name correctly.

"Aimée," said he; "ay, she's a bonnie bird."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### HOW THE MASTER DID *NOT* TAKE OUT A PATENT.

THE Master and Hamish returned home in the expectation that O'Rhea would follow them when it grew dark, so that he might run no risk of discovery by the elderly gossips about the Ilkastane loan and the mouths of the closes. There was little likelihood of his recognition by the younger generation after seven years' absence on one side and change on the other. Darkness came, but no O'Rhea, so that the Master began to grow anxious.

"I fear me," said he to himself, though Hamish could hear, "that Fergus has gotten himself bitten again by the mad dog that's aye been at his heel." Seeing the wonder and alarm on Hamish's face, he added, "I mean, laddie, that he must have satten down and stuck there to pree the Bailie's French brandy, though it's no to be compared wi' good Scots usquebagh. The Bailie, as I understand, was gey couth and cosy wi' him the other night."

"Ay," said Hamish, "they spak' the Bailie's ain language thegither; he tauld me it was French."

"He? Wha's *he*, laddie?"

"Him," answered Hamish, "that ye ca'd Fergus, but I maunna name him."

"That's right; it's as weel to leave him as nameless as the De'il. But French, I daresay, it would be," said the Master. "Ay, Fergus was aye a clever chiel', though I didna know he could gabble French. I only hope his French and his Bailie mayna lead him, afore he kens, into the clutches of the Fiscal."

He was on the point of setting out to seek O'Rhea, when a step sounded on the creaking stairs, the sneck was rattled, and a voice sounded without.

"Are ye in, Jeems? Here's a havering, doddering creatur o' a foreigner speiring for ye."

The Master opened the door and saw Kirsty Kyle.

"Is that yoursel', Kirsty? And wha's that ye've got wi' ye?"

"Wha should it be, Jeems?" asked Kirsty. "Wha ither but Bailie Lippen's bowing body tying his bit tongue in a French knot wi' speiring for the Maister o' Hutcheon? And on the Sabbath day, too. What for canna they foreign folk speak like reasonable beings that ken their Bible? De'il a Bible amang them, I daresay. Naething but Popish images and pictures, as I've heard the minister tell. Ay, John Knox was the billy for them."

"I t'ank you, madame," said the limp, melancholy Jaques, bowing to Kirsty.

"Na, na, man; dinna madam me," said Kirsty. "I'm nane o' your French madams. I'm just an auld Scots wife wi' a braid Scots tongue in my head."

"Gae 'wa', Kirsty, gae 'wa'," said the Master, waxing impatient, "and dinna vex the man wi' your havers. He's a stranger, Kirsty, and ye should be more civil to a stranger than to your ain folk."

"Ay, Jeems," answered Kirsty drily. "Weel, weel; but tak' ye care o' French Papists; though, sorra till me! I was forgettin' ye're something o' a Papist yoursel', being o' the gentle persuasion." \*

"Ay, Kirsty," said the Master, bending on her one of

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\* The Episcopal form of religion was called by the old-fashioned "the gentle persuasion," because it was much affected by the gentry.



his severe looks, "ye'd better let that flee stick to the wa'."

"Weel, weel, Jeems, ye want your say wi' the man," said she, descending the stairs slowly. "It's a pretty evening; the stars are blinking out, and the moon'll be up in a whiley."

"Ye want to speak to me," said the Master to Jaques when Kirsty was gone; "come in."

Jaques glanced about him with a politely veiled surprise. Could that be the abode of so great a man as *le Maître d'Hutcheon*?—that bare garret, with a carpenter's bench, where the only touch of splendour was a silver candlestick with a wax candle? Yet had he not heard of great lords of France, whom the Revolution had made very poor—so poor that they had been compelled to live how they could and by whatever handicraft or occupation they could pick up? Perhaps these rude Ecossais had also had their Revolution. Therefore Jaques was exceedingly polite and deferential to the Master of Hutcheon.

"*M'sieu le Maître*," said he, bowing low, "*M'sieu le Bailli* send me to bear his compliments and to inform *M'sieu le Maître* that the gross gentleman, the friend of *M'sieu le Maître*, will remain to couch in the house of *M'sieu le Bailli*."

"You mean," said the Master, "that my friend will not come back here the night?"

"Yes, *M'sieu le Maître*," answered Jaques; "the gross gentleman will not return here this night."

"I thank ye for coming with the message," said the Master. "And now ye'll permit me to offer ye a tass of usquebagh to 'liven ye, for Kirsty Kyle's conversation and conduct are just a wee bit weary and waeful." Jaques bowed and looked wistful, as if not quite understanding what had been said. But the Master poured him out a glass of usquebagh, and continued, "Our folk here are gey rough and rude—gey uncivilised—but they mean no harm."

"Oh, *M'sieu le Maître*," said Jaques with his thin smile, "your people are not gay; they are *lourd*. But what would you, *M'sieu le Maître*? This is a difficult country

to live in; it is a country of stones and wind and rain." And Jaques with another bow took off his 'livening glass.

"Ay," said the Master, "ilka man to his own. Ye'd like your own French country better than this, I daursay."

"Oh, *M'sieu le Maître*," answered Jaques, "I love to think of my country, it is true. *France! La belle France!*" he interjected, and shed a gentle tear. "But also I love this country. I have been here many years—many, many. I was prisoner of war with *M'sieu le Bailli*, and I have stay with him all the time."

"Ay, ay, just that," said the Master, pulling his moustaches. "Even the Bailie has folk that stick to him."

"And," continued Jaques, impelled by the 'livening effect of the usquebagh, "this your country, *M'sieu le Maître*, is not always disagreeable; sometime the sun shine. Then I say, '*Voilà le soleil! Je suis heureux!*' Pardon. I wish to say, *M'sieu le Maître*, 'Here is the sun! I am happy!'"

Jaques took his leave, but that saying of his kindled a flame in the Master's mind. "*Voilà le soleil! Je suis heureux*—Here is the sun! I am happy!" The Master was not a man of speculation and he dreamed with difficulty; but he had heard a saying which provoked his fancy and stimulated his thought. To give his folk sunshine, or to take them into it, proved to him to be the meaning of all he had longed and hoped to do for them. He loved his folk, and he had made sacrifices for them; he had worked for them and had contrived for them with such means as were to his hand, somewhat blindly, perhaps—or, at least, with a limited horizon; he had helped and guided them, and so he had ruled them, as he conceived God had set him to do. Now the chance phrase of the old Frenchman suddenly illuminated the prospect, raised him as on a hill-top of contemplation, widened the horizon, and showed him a land of Beulah.

"Ay, ay," he said to himself, "we want the sun!"

In that thought he slept and waked, and passed Monday in his usual occupations. In his brother's fortune he felt more and more strongly he had a powerful means of action,

and he dreamed many dreams of what might be done. And though these shifting dreams produced then no distinct vision for realisation, they made his mind prompt to seize such suggestions as were soon to be offered it, as sun and wind and shower ferment the earth and prepare it for seed.

In the evening, when it was dark, O'Rhea came to remove his handful of traps to the cottage which the Bailie had let to him. He sat down a while and talked, for he was curious to learn whether Hutcheon had formed any plans for the expenditure of his fortune. He still harped on the greatness of the position which the Master might assume, on the self-aggrandisement he might derive from so much money, till the Master was ashamed and angry that he should be so misunderstood.

"It's a pity, Fergus," said he, "that ye should ken me so little. I never was a bleezing chield, and what for should I break out now? Ye did not use to be slow at the uptake. I had thought ye'd understand me, and give me your goodwill and the fousion of your soul and body in whatever we might undertake. For I will say that for ye, Fergus—ye're just a deevil of a steam-engine to gar a thing birr when once ye take up wi't."

"Well, now, then, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, spreading himself on the table to listen with a business-like attention, a little alarmed at the Master's tone of offence, but more mollified by his praise, "what is it ye really want to do?"

"I'm for one step at a time, Fergus," said the Master, "and I must get out at the door before I close the door behind me. Well, so I must have the 'Whamleerie' fixed, thread and thrum, before I think of anything else. Now ye spake the other night of the needcessity of a patent to make the thing go smoothly on in the hands of the weaver-lads, and so now that I can afford it a patent I'll have. Ye're a chield that has been up and down and about the world; ye ken a routh of things that I ken nothing of, and I am depending on you to tell me how to get this patent."

O'Rhea knew that Tamson had been closeted with the Bailie the day before, and he guessed that they must have taken already the necessary steps for making the invention

of the "Whamleerie" their own ; if they had not, it was their own fault. He could not damage his reputation with the Master by holding him back any longer from giving effect on his part to the invention. If his desire was not already fulfilled of destroying the Master's interest in the thing, and so of keeping his money and attention for other schemes which he designed to set before him, then it never would be fulfilled, for he had no mind to risk a quarrel with the Master over so small a matter.

"Well, Hutcheon," said he, leaning forward with an earnest look of business activity, "you must first write out your specification—an exact description of every part of your machine and the purpose of it, with drawings—on a sheet or two of foolscap."

"'Deed!" exclaimed the Master, "it'll be a fool's cap to me ; for it'll stick me to write an exact screed of anything, forbye making strokes and apperzands of pictures. But cannot I set somebody on to do it for me ?"

"I tell you what, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, seeing a chance of delaying the business, "ye had better take it to your lawyer, to draw up the specification and see the whole thing through. That's the way. It'll cost ye little, and the billies in his office are trained to set things down so that there should not be a single mesh in the words that a creature could get through."

So it came to pass that next morning Hutcheon took one of his whamleeries and went into Inverdoon to call on Sharpe, his family lawyer. He explained the purpose of his invention and showed its working, and Sharpe engaged to draw up the specification, and to see the business through with the Patent Agent. Next day he received a copy of the specification, in order that he might make objection if the description was not exactly set forth ; but the invention was so simple that it was scarcely possible to go astray in its description, and he accordingly sent the specification back, with the note that it was correct. On the second day thereafter he received an intimation from the lawyer that there seemed to be some difficulty about effecting the patent, coupled with the request that Mr.

Hutcheon would call. Hutcheon, therefore, again visited the lawyer.

"Weel, Mr. Hutcheon," said Sharpe, "the fact is ye seem to be forestalled wi' your invention. The agent tells me he has undertaken a thing just the identical fac-simile o' yours."

"But, man," said the Master, "that's not possible! I have never seen anything like it; it's contrived all out of my own head."

"Weel, weel, Mr. Hutcheon," said Sharpe, "ye'd best step round wi' me to Mr. Hornbeam, the agent."

So they stepped round to Mr. Hornbeam's. When they made known their errand, Hornbeam at once informed them that a patent for exactly the same invention—with this difference, that it was intended for use on both hand and power looms—had been applied for on Monday in the name of Bailie Lepine.

"And, for that matter, Mr. Hutcheon," said Hornbeam, "here's a timber model o' the thing."

"But," exclaimed Hutcheon, when he had looked at the model, "that's mine—my very own—made with my own hands!"

"Ay, man?" said Hornbeam. "And the Bailie says it's his ain. There's a bonny case, Mr. Sharpe. Will ye mak' a plea o't? Will ye tak' it into court? Will ye fight it, man?"

"Fight!" exclaimed the Master, grasping his staff, all the angrier that he saw his protestation of right even to the Bailie's model was scarcely believed even by his own man of law. "Fight at law! A chield contrives some gate to steal my property—a thing I've made with my own hands!—and his agent and factor up and says, 'Will ye fight? Will ye prove at law that it's yours, and wear your siller, just to give me a bit job?' To the de'il, man, wi' your law, your pleas, and your cases, your quillies and your quodlibets! I have neither time nor siller nor patience to wear on your law and your patents and your specifications! The Bailie is a thief, and if he will not render to me without law what's my own, I'll take it out of the skin o' him."

He struck his iron-shod staff on the floor and marched out, leaving the two men of law trembling with their "quill-lets and quodlibets."

"Eh, but he's an awfu' man!" cried Hornbeam to his neighbour.

"As quiet a chield as can be," observed Sharpe, shaking his head, "till his dander's up. But he'll no take his *remedium juris*, I doubt."

The Master marched home, seething with indignation. He entered his garret and went to the corner where his whamleeries were piled. He counted them, and counted again. He had made ten, and there were only eight; one, therefore, had been stolen, and the Bailie had stolen it! He did not descend from his height of resentment to inquire by what secret means the Bailie had spirited a copy of the whamleerie out of his garret. He was not a detective; he was not concerned to prove the theft through its stages; it was enough for him that the Bailie possessed what had been stolen, and claimed it as his own. He therefore set his blue bonnet more securely on his head, and, still grasping his staff, set out for the Hargate Mill.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE END OF THE "WHAMLEERIE."

AS on a former occasion, he told the lad in the office to say to the Bailie that the Master of Hutcheon wished to speak with him, and the Bailie hurried forth and with great politeness invited the Master to enter. A young lady rose from a chair near the Bailie's desk.

"Permit me, sir," said the Bailie, "to present to you my daughter. She has just come home to her father from school in France."

The Master doffed his bonnet and stood with his hands

on his staff, and his head inclined a little towards the young lady.

"I have seen your dochter before, Bailie," said he, "though only once; but I'm not likely to forget her."

Aimée thought that a quaint, unusual, but pleasant kind of compliment, and she blushed and smiled.

"Yes, papa," said she, "I met the Master on Sunday afternoon, and George introduced me."

"Ah, *oui*," said the Bailie, nodding and pursing his lips in some puzzlement, "it is quite correct. Will you sit, sir?"

"Weel, Bailie," said the Master, refraining from a seat for the moment, "I would like to have a private word with ye—a word that might not be fit for a young leddy's hearing."

"Aimée, *ma chère*," said the Bailie, "you will sit in George's room for a few minutes till monsieur's business is finish."

"*Oui*, papa," answered Aimée, and withdrew to an inner room, where her pretty head was still visible through the glass of the partition.

"She's a bonnie, winsome bird," said the Master to himself, unable to keep his eye from referring to that gracious head, and taking account of it.

"Well, sir," said the Bailie with a smile of resigned politeness, "what?—is it the prices of the weavers again?"

"Na, Bailie," answered the Master, "it's no that." He did not go on at once. He was puzzled with his own feeling; he had come with piled-up indignation, and now he felt that his indignation had sunk, as a castle of sand sinks when the incoming tide creeps up around it. He looked at the Bailie in the reflected light of that gracious head within the glass partition, and he found it hard to believe that the father of the "bonny bird" had committed so mean an offence as that he stood in his mind convicted of. "It's a doom's wonder to me, Bailie," said he at last, "how ye could do such a thing, for ye do not look like it—I must say that."

"Monsieur?" exclaimed the Bailie, with a considering twirl of his eye.

"It's just this, Bailie," said the Master. "I, with my own hands, make a 'Whamleerie'—a bit sliding boxie with shelves to fit on to the weavers' lays, so that they may weave stripe without shifting shuttles out of the lay. I set about getting a patent for the thing, when, lo and behold! I'm told that some other body is a day or two before me with the identical same thing!"

The Bailie tightened his lips and looked watchful.

"Now, wha d'ye think, Bailie," continued Hutcheon, "that other body is?"

"Oh, it is me, of course," said the Bailie, with a light wave of the hand.

"Ay, Bailie, ye're just the very man. Now, I tell ye flat, Bailie, when I heard that, I was in a rage, for *your* 'Whamleerie's' *my* 'Whamleerie,' made with my own hands."

"What, *Monsieur le Maître*?" cried the Bailie. "You mean, sir——"

"I mean this, Bailie: The very model that your agent got from you was made by me, with my own hands. I made ten—yours is one of the ten."

"Oh, sir, but this is nonsense you say! It is not possible!" cried the Bailie, becoming well-nigh frantic, and beating off with his fat hands the thought that something which he had considered his was on the point of slipping from him.

"It's gospel truth I tell ye, Bailie, whether ye ken it or no. Do not contradict me, Bailie; do not anger me, for I'm not to hold or to bind when once I'm angered."

The Bailie saw the Master's nose—that nose which so impressed him—seem to become more threatening, and his eye to glow with subdued fire, and his heart at once became pacific, though it remained wary.

"No, no, sir," said the Bailie. "Excuse me that I say so. But now, sir, listen. I will tell the whole matter—all of it, because I always try to do fair. I am not responsible. I did not make the invention. Another make the invention, or say he make it, and bring it to me, and I buy it with what you say 'siller'—*beaucoup d'argent*."



"And wha, Bailie," asked the Master, grasping his staff, "was the man that brought ye the thing?"

"Truly, sir," said the Bailie, "I do not know that I can tell."

The Master felt his wrath rise, but he had another glimpse of the gracious head through the glass partition, and his wrath was assuaged.

"Hoot, toot, Bailie!" he exclaimed. "If we're to understand one another, all the truth, and nothing but the truth, must lie spread between us. Who's the man?"

"Well, *Monsieur le Maître*," said the Bailie reluctantly, drumming the while on his desk, "the man is Hew Tamson."

"Oh, Tamson's the thief, is he? And by that token, now that I bethink me, he brought ye the thing in his hand on Sabbath afternoon, did he no?"

The Bailie blinked, but he was bound to admit that that was true. He was distressed, for he could not guess what this terrible person with the commanding nose would do.

"It is a simple thing, the invention, sir," said he somewhat feebly. "Perhaps it happen that Tamson invent it at the same time as you, *Monsieur le Maître*. Eh? Think you not so?"

"Hoot, Bailie! I can tell my own handiwork, and I tell ye your model—the thing ye got from Tamson's hands—was made by me."

"Ah, *oui*. Well, *Monsieur le Maître*," said the Bailie cheerfully, endeavouring to stave off a conclusion; "we must see what is to be done. I will question Tamson, the villain! Yes, I will question, inquire, and then we will talk."

"I'll talk no more about it, Bailie," said the Master. "And as for Tamson, do not ye fash about him. I'll deal with him. Ye have bought the thing, Bailie, and paid for't, and so it must be yours."

"I thank God," said the Bailie with the effusion of relief, "that it will not break me if I do lose the money."

"Do not thank God, Bailie," said the Master severely; "thank the De'il! For all this buying and selling, and

trocking and thieving is Deevil's work!" But at that moment he caught another glimpse of the gracious head of the "winsome bird," and it smote him with compunction that he was not treating her father with enough consideration. "But I have done ye wrong, Bailie. I crave your pardon for thinking ye kenned of the thieving."

"Oh, *Monsieur le Maître*," exclaimed the Bailie, with a supple bow and a light wave of the hand, "it is nothing. And, *voyez*, sir, I tell you what I will do, sir. I will give your weavers the things, when they are made, for nothing!—nothing!"

The Master received that burst of generosity calmly, if not sadly.

"I doubt they'll do them little good, since they cannot have them all to themselves, as I intended."

He rose to depart, and had a fuller view of the gracious head.

"Well, sir, well," said the Bailie, "I am sorry; but you see——" He jingled the money in his pocket, and pursed his lips. "We are neighbours, *Monsieur le Maître*," he added suddenly, "so let us be friends—eh?"

"I have no mind to quarrel, Bailie," said the Master quietly, "no mind at all. But now I must go my ways. I wish ye good-day, Bailie." And he put on his bonnet and strode out. "Ay, ay," said he to himself when in the open air, "it's the sun we want, and it's the sun we must have now."

"Ah, that is a gentleman," said the Bailie, opening the door of communication with his daughter—"a gentleman truly, *voyez-vous*. And if he look poor he is not. What? To lose some thousand of pound—to abandon what make much money—pif!—it is nothing to him!—nothing at all! Aimée, *ma chère*, it is necessary that we ask *Monsieur le Maître* to dinner."

Meanwhile *Monsieur le Maître* strode homeward with a severe brow. As he walked, he balanced his heavy staff and considered it; it had no suppleness, and he shook his head and continued his way. He ascended to his garret, and rummaged till he found a very supple black switch,

whole, unwoven, and much more terrible than the heaviest riding whip. It was about the skaling time of the mill, and he went out with the whip in his hand and slowly ascended the loan to meet the work-folk on their way to dinner. At the top of the loan he halted, as on the border of his own jurisdiction. While he waited there came along the old soldier, the one-eyed Steven, in company with the Crimean veteran, Donald M'Kay. Both looked as if they had had the sun in their eyes. Donald solemnly strutted with the regulation swing of his kilt, and Steven, with his trousers tied up below the knee, in his habit as he sat at his loom, strutted in unison, as if he had donned the kilt anew. They were passing without noting the Master, when on a sudden thought he called them.

"Steven! Donald!"

"By Gosh!" exclaimed Steven, halting and observing him who called. "It's the Maister himsel'!" And he raised his hand in military salute. "It's the Maister," he repeated, aside to Donald. "Salute, min! salute!" And Donald saluted. "It's a bonny day for the neaps," he remarked. "This blink o' sun'll bring them on."

"Steven!" exclaimed the Master with some severity.

"Maister!" answered Steven, standing to attention.

"Ye've been at the whisky!"

"By the Lord Harry, Maister," protested Steven, "just a mutchkin atween's, in honour o' my chum here hame frae Rooshia—a sodger o' Raglan's, by Gosh! Just a sook to weet the whistle!—naething but a tot to fill a thummle!—a drap to kill the worm in the stamach! That's a', by the living Jingo! Isna't, Donald?"

"Nae mair than would mak' a flee fou'," murmured Donald solemnly. "The first drap I've had since yestreen."

"I want ye, Steven," said the Master, "you and Donald, to do something."

"Right y'are, Maister, by Gosh!" promptly responded Steven. "We're your men. Eh, Donald?" with a fiery wink to the Crimean veteran.

"I've got a reckoning to make wi' Hew Tamson," said the Master, "and I'm going to count the reckoning wi' this,"

shaking the whip. "Ye'll hear the reason in good time. I'll stop him when he comes along, and ye'll stan' aside him and hold him, if there be need, the while I explain the business. Will ye do't?"

"Fine, that, by Gosh!" said Steven. "Eh, Donald?"

"Brawly, that, Steven," answered Donald. "I mind Tamson. He's a slinking blackguard. Gin I had my begnet at my hip I'd gi'e him a job wi' good-will."

"We want no begnets, Donald," said the Master. "I wouldna blaud a begnet wi' him. Here come the lads and lasses frae the mill."

As the workers straggled up—the young men with linen jackets, and the young women with tartan shawls over their heads—the Master stopped them, and begged them to "bide a wee," he had something to say to them. They waited and wondered, and to pass the seconds joked with Steven and Donald, the former of whom shook out of his one glowing eye encouraging winks to the lasses, stroked the ringlets trained before his ears, and juttet out to as much advantage as possible his noble calves.

Presently Tamson appeared, and the Master stepped forward.

"Hew Tamson," said he, "I've a word to say to ye."

Tamson stopped and looked around him with quick glances of wonder and of suspicion, while Steven and Donald took their places one on either side of him.

"Say awa'," said Tamson. "But what for are you lads and lasses no at your kail?"

The lads and lasses made no answer. Their attention was curiously fixed on the Master, who seemed to grow taller as he faced the tall and bulky Tamson with his hands behind him.

"Hew Tamson," said he, "ye're a common thief! a mean, creeping, damnable thief! I ha'e been working lang on a contrivance to help the weavers to weave stripes without taking out their shuttles, and ye ha'e stolen't, and sold it to the Bailie, and the Bailie has ta'en out a patent for't.—Ye understand me," said he, looking round upon the lads and lasses. "Ye're a' sons and daughters o' weavers, and ye

can guess what a help the contrivance would be in weaving stripe; and ye'll soon see't, for the thing will be fitted on to your power-looms. Weel, I meant it only for your fathers' hand-looms, to mak' the stripe work quicker and better, and Hew Tamson there, the traitor! has stolen it frae the hand-looms and gi'en it ower to the power-looms. I might prove at law that it's mine, but I winna spend precious time—weeks, months, and maybe years—and bags o' siller on proving that what's mine is my own. I cannot be fashed wi' the law. I take my own lawing."

"What for do ye hearken to sic havers?" snarled Tamson, turning away. "He's clean daft! doited, my certie! But what's this?" he exclaimed, for, on his attempting to move away, Steven and Donald had laid hands on him.

"Hew Tamson," said the Master, "ye've betrayed your ain folk and stolen frae them what would ha'e made their lays ca' blither. Ye've robbéd wives and weans o' bit and sup, and I'd be only in my rights if I hanged up the great slab o' a body o' ye for craws to peck at. I canna do that, but I've got to read ye a lesson. Down wi' him!"

Steven and Donald with great address gave a sudden twist to Tamson's arms, so that he was compelled to stoop in an ignominious position, and the Master began to lay on with the bull's whip. Tamson roared, "Let me go! let me go!" mixed with the vilest and most opprobrious names and epithets. He sank to his knees, amid the silent laughter of the lads and lasses, but he was still compelled to stoop, and the whip still whistled in the air and sang and whacked upon his back. At length his roaring sank into groaning, and agonised grunts of "Oh, my back! Oh, my poor back! Oh, he's killing me! He's murdering me!"

At length the Master stopped.

"Lead him hame," said he, "and shut him inside his ain door."

## CHAPTER XVI.

"VOILÀ LE SOLEIL."

AFTER that singular and humiliating punishment administered to Hew Tamson by the Master, the folk waited, on the *qui vive* for a sequel, for something to happen in the way of retaliation. Nobody thought that Tamson would literally return blow for blow, but everyone expected that he would have the law of the Master. The folk, however, did not clearly understand the matter at issue, or they would have guessed that, if Tamson were truly guilty—as he was believed to be—of the theft the Master laid to his charge, the last thing he would do would be to go to law and incur the risk of a searching inquiry into all that had led to such a consummation. One day passed, and another; both Tamson and the Master went out and came in before the watchful eyes of all the folk in the loan, but Tamson did nothing, and the Master gave no heed, and the folk were disappointed. Tamson's wife, indeed, talked loudly at first to her gossips of what she and her husband might have done in certain circumstances.

"He kenned better," said she, speaking of the Master, "than lay a hand on Hew atween the jambs o' his ain door. Gin he had done that, I'm tauld he would ha' been guilty o' *hamesucken*, and that's a mighty offence against the law, and the law would ha' had him on the hip, as sure as death!"

"But ye'd ha' kaimed his head wi' your ten talents, Meg, I'se warrant," sneered Kirsty Kyle, "afore the law could lay a finger on him!"

"Na, Kirsty, woman," said Tamson himself in his smooth, dry voice. "Meg's no to haud or to bind in a common way, but she kens better than to raise her hand against the Maister o' Hutcheon. We respect him ower muckle; that's our fau't," he insisted, with his red, piggyish eye on his wife, as if to admonish her to keep silence before Kirsty, who was likely, he thought, to report all she heard to the Master.

“ We respect him by ordinar’, and though he has mista’en me and misused me, I freely forgi’e him, as the Book commands; and I’d harm him nae mair than if he were the Lord’s Anointed.”

“ Gae ’wa’ wi’ ye, Hew !” exclaimed Kirsty, taking herself off. “ Ye’re just a bletherskite ! ‘The Lord’s Anointed,’ quo’ he !”

There were few who believed in Tamson’s forgiveness, though all were fully possessed of Tamson’s prudence.

“ *Bu-h-h !*” said M’Cree, when the gossip was retailed among the weavers. “ Mark my words—I’m no addicted to leeing—Tamson’ll hain that up—he’ll no forget it. It’s a lang worm that has nae turning.”

“ By Gosh !” exclaimed Steven, casting violent winks around, “ and it’s Hew Tamson that’s the lang worm ! By the Lord Harry, it is !”

So the days passed and Saturday came, when there was a scene in the weaving shop which banished Tamson’s affair from attention, and introduced to all with whom we are concerned what was destined to be the crowning interest of their lives. The Master sat engaged in one of his beneficent occupations. Girt about with an apron, he sat in the midst of Loudon’s loom “ twisting ” Loudon’s web—attaching, that is, with nimble finger and thumb, each individual thread of the new to each individual thrum of the old. The dark and damp weaving-shop, smelling of earth, batter, and dressed webs, was silent save for the thin voice of Hamish, who alone kept the Master company, and read to him from *Robinson Crusoe*. The Master, however, seemed to give but half his attention to the reading ; the other half was absent, for his twisting needed it not, and his eyes, with little speculation, roamed round among the dim, silent looms, or gazed through the patched little window opposite him into the bright sunshine, and away over the kail and potato patches to a tall steeple of the town which stood up against the sky. And still Hamish read on with his eyes glued to the page of the prince of desolate-islanders, and the Master dipped at intervals finger and thumb in his little boxes of chalk and powdered rosin, and continued twisting thread with thrum.

Presently voices were heard in the close, heads passed the window, and there entered the weaving-shop O'Rhea, Steven, and the soldier M'Kay. All three had evidently been tasting freely the wine of the country, and while Hamish brought his reading to a halt and gazed on them, they stood and solemnly gazed upon Hutcheon and observed the snap and twist of his nimble fingers. O'Rhea was in a bitter, cynical mood. He had been haunting the Master for days—ever since he had cast aside the "Whamleerie"—expecting to hear something of what was next to be done; he had listened to all the gossip that was going, had laughed loudly and slapped his leg when he was told that Tamson had spoken of the Master as the "Lord's Anointed," and had noted the seriousness and silence, the absent-mindedness, or thoughtfulness of the Master, and then in impatience had turned away and recklessly cast himself into the company of Steven and the Crimean veteran, who were seeing the week out together with brotherly kindness over all the mutchkins and drams they could compass.

"And to think," said he, watching the Master's nimble finger and thumb, "that that hand, those fingers, should be gripping a weapon—a sword or a gun! Lord! Lord! What would his fighting forbears think to see the Master of Hutcheon at this hour twisting a creeshie weaver's web!" and he laughed, "Te-he-he!"

The Master's spirit dwelt serenely above all opinion save that of O'Rhea. O'Rhea he regarded as a man of knowledge and understanding; besides that, he had been a valued coadjutor of his brother Geordie, and therefore O'Rhea's adverse criticism piqued and angered him, the while he resented it as grossly founded and as too often running counter to the trend of his own views and ambitions. On this occasion the Master, struck in his dearest foible, was angry beyond his wont. He ceased his twisting and raised his head, with flaming eye and open nostril. In the strong, assured, scornful voice of conviction and authority he spoke.

"Fergus," said he, "do not presume to judge of what's beyond ye! There's nothing a gentleman can demean himself by doing or by being, except by oppressing or giving the



go-by to the folk the Almighty has put under his charge, or by being a coward or forsworn! But ye do not understand they things, and therefore ye should not meddle with them!—because ye're not a gentleman. Ye're just a fiery, flaming lump of common red clay. Ye have your uses, and ye have a kind of understanding—ye have hot blood in ye, and ye have a head on your shoulders—but ye're not a gentleman. Do not presume, therefore, to say what a gentleman should be or do!"

O'Rhea's eyes wavered a moment and his red face took a touch of greyness, but his show of heartiness and joviality asserted itself.

"By Jove, Hutcheon!" he exclaimed, looking and speaking in his frankest manner, "ye're right, quite right! I ask your pardon!" and he stretched to the Master his great, hairy, freckled hand. "I'm not a gentleman, I admit! I'm just a common, gross beast sprung from the soil—the mixed soil of bonnie Scotland and old Ireland! I did wrong to judge the conduct of a gentleman."

"By the Lord Harry!" exclaimed the delighted Steven, "the Maister's right, Donald, man," he repeated, shaking out a rapid wink at his crony, "he's right! A gintleman's aye a gintleman, though he hasna a sixpence to stan' a frien' a dram! By the muckle black De'il he is!"

"Of course he's right," said Donald. "They're baith right! We're a' right! So let's ha'e another mutchkin, for auld langsyne, my dears!"

"To h—ll with your mutchkins!" exclaimed O'Rhea. "I've tasted too much of your mutchkins. And now I'm going to be shaken out of my bones by ague, if I don't take care! The fit's coming on me! Feel those fingers of mine, Hutcheon, my boy! It's the awful jungle fever waking in me!"

"Ha'e another mutchkin," urged Donald; "it'll drive it into the open, knock it down, and settle it. There's nae-thing like a dram for the shivers!"

"I'd like a warm, and a smoke—my own particular smoke," said O'Rhea, looking at the brown fire-eaten grate. "That would drive it off. Here, my boy," said he, turning

to Hamish, "here's a shilling. Get some shavings and peat and coals, and let's have a fire."

"Put up your siller, Fergus," said the Master, rising from his occupation. "We can make a bit fire without wearing siller."

The Master himself brought some shavings and sticks, and a piece of glowing peat from his own room upstairs, and Hamish brought coal from the coal-hole under the stairs, and soon there was a bright fire burning, which speedily sucked up the damp, earthy smell of the weaving-shop. The Master re-seated himself at his twisting, Hamish sat in silence, with his finger in his book, and the three visitors seated themselves about the fire, gratefully spreading their hands to the blaze, for the keen air of spring was made sufficiently chill by the damp of the long low workshop.

"A low in the lum," said Donald, "is a bonny thing; it's as bonny, and friendly, and cosy a thing as I ken. I mind when we was in the trenches——"

"It's not so bonny as the sun," said the Master, glancing through the window; "it would be better for us all to be out in the sun there than to be hunkering round a bit blaze of peat and coal. Ay, ay," said he, as if in labouring thought, "it's the sun we need for light and heat and all!"

O'Rhea raised his head, and turned and looked at the Master. Had he not often heard him say something of that kind lately? What did he mean by it? What was he thinking of?

"And what's the book you're reading, my son?" said O'Rhea, holding his hand to Hamish. "Let me look." Hamish handed him *Robinson Crusoe*, while he gazed at the great hairy legs of Donald, and wondered that they should look so much liker the limbs of a tree than the limbs of a man. "*Robinson Crusoe*, eh?" said O'Rhea, as if he had forgotten that he had looked at the boy's book before.

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Steven. "Hamish is the boy. He's a don at the books. He's the loon for the uptak'! He sticks to the learning like a partin! By Jingo he does!" and he spat with energy in the fire.

“And just to think,” said O’Rhea, opening the book, and running the leaves from under his thumb like a bookish man, “that in seven years I’ve seen more than Robin Crusoe in his whole life. Crusoe! I could give them, boy, stuff enough to make twenty Crusoes!—a hundred Crusoe books!”

Hamish opened his eyes in voracious curiosity, and O’Rhea, handing him back the book, took certain things from an inner pocket. He cut very small a piece of light-coloured tobacco, took from a little brass box embossed with strange figures a soft black globule or pill, rolled tobacco and pill together between his palms, and put the preparation in a black pipe with a long, jointed stem. Then, crouching towards the fire, he lit the pipe with a glowing stick of wood, and smoked, seating himself on the step of the loom of Donald’s father. Not a touch or movement had escaped Hamish, for there before him was a live Crusoe, and the bluish-brown, sickly-scented smoke was redolent of romance. The lightest touch on the spring of the imagination, and, hey, presto! that red-haired man with the hairy, freckled hands was clothed in chimerical skins, with a gorgeous parrot over him, a melancholy dog by his side, and terrific visions of black men like demons haunting the background.

“How would you like, boy,” asked O’Rhea, turning suddenly to Hamish, “to sail away to seek adventures and to make your fortune? though, by George! the more adventures the less fortune! Lord, the books I could fill chock-full with my stories! and every word true, mind ye—every word!”

“*Robinson Crusoe*’s true,” said Hamish.

“Oh, is it, my son?” sniggered O’Rhea.

“Ye can easy see that,” said Donald, “if ye read on to the end. If the man wins hame it’ll be true; if he winsna hame it’s a lee, for how can folk ken a’ about it if he winsna hame to tell?”

“Arena the black folk,” asked the Master, “in they countries ye ken o’, sore hadden down, oppressed, and massacred by bloodthirsty tyrants?”

"Most of them, Hutcheon, my boy," said O'Rhea, with a certain smack of bitterness, "a world's sight better off than poor brutes of Irish peasants, or English labourers—yes, by God! or than Scotch weavers working in damp, dark holes that smell like graves, and feeding on porridge and sowens, sowens and porridge!"

"Sowens," said Steven, "on a cauld night are no to be sneezed at! By Jingo, they're no!"

"No cold nights where I mean, Steven, my lad—not any at all," said O'Rhea. And," he continued, turning and flashing on the Master a sudden thought, "the sun, the sun you keep hankering after—the sun shining all day and every day—never too hot and never too cold, but always sweetly and softly wrapping you about, as ministers say of the love and mercy of God."

"And whaur's that?" asked Hutcheon, pausing in his occupation.

"In the islands of the ocean—the Golden Hesperides!"

There was silence for a moment or two; none but O'Rhea knew anything, or had heard anything before, of these islands. Hutcheon had heard of the Hebrides, but they could not be meant; and O'Rhea gazed at the fire and slowly sucked his pipe, the bluish-brown smoke of which twirled and writhed and spread over their heads, and the sickly pungent fumes of which agreeably assailed the nostrils.

"Ah," he resumed, in a gloating, long-drawn murmur, and with a relaxative shiver of desire, "to lie in the rustling shade of the trees and eat the fruit that drops into your hand and that dissolves in your mouth like ambrosia, the food of the gods. To listen—no, not to listen to, but to hear the chirp and call of brilliant birds, and the buzz and hum of insects as brilliant and almost as big as birds, with the bright, bright sunshine all around, with the soft breeze blowing—no, no—breathing, gently breathing from the fresh blue sea, touching and tickling your cheek like down; to see along the beach the rare, dusky beauties sporting and swimming in the dancing, sparkling waves!"

"By the Lord Harry! Eh, Donald?" exclaimed Steven, with a nudge to his crony.

O'Rhea did not heed the interruption; the fumes of his pipe were enwrapping and intoxicating his brain, and still softly sucking the smoke, he continued his low, gloating monologue:

"And to long to be diving among them, as you long for a drink of water, but to be too happy and too lazy to stir! Oh, my God! the Paradise it is! And to think that we're here!"

"Braw and bonny—braw and bonny. But do they work at nothing?" asked the Master, breaking in with his clear, serious voice upon the gloating, regretful monotone.

"Work?" exclaimed O'Rhea, with impatience and scorn. "They wouldn't know what you meant. Why should they work? They can have all they want without anything that's worth calling work, and they don't make work for work's sake, like fools in these countries here. They tickle the ground, and it laughs into plenty. They have cocoa for milk, wine, and oil. A land of milk and honey—milk and honey! What do they lack? a Paradise of Love and Plenty! Love and Plenty all the year round! Sunshine and summer forever! No winter, no storm—except," and he sank his voice in reluctant admission, "a bagful of wind at times."

"That must be needed to steer things about," said the Master. "It's fine, Fergus, man—fine and bonny, and tempting to think o', but without a bit bluffart of wind now and then our folk would be choked in the soft air, and without a spirt of rain at times they'd weary of the lee-lang summer day forever and aye."

"Oh, there's plenty of agreeable change," said O'Rhea, waking up a little, and speaking in a more matter-of-fact tone. "They build houses, and they weave mats, and they do a little fighting with their neighbours, just to keep their hand in."

"That's the ticket!" exclaimed Steven. "Eh, Donald, ye limmer! Toss the plaid, and swing the blade, by Jingo!"

"There may be," said the Master seriously and slowly,

showing plainly to the acute O'Rhea the groove in which his thoughts ran—"there may be such bonnie soft wonderful places in this wonderful world, whaur the mouth can be filled just for the trouble of opening it, but I doubt they're not for our folk. In such a soft air, lying on soft mossy banks, they'd soon ha'e no fousion; they'd yawn and think long for their old country, and I doubt the De'il would be at their lug putting them up to business of his own."

"By George, Maister," said Steven, "I'd risk it! Love and Plenty, sir! Love and Plenty, damme!"

"Humph!" said O'Rhea, still sucking his pipe. "It's so like the canny-headed, serious-minded, and slow-hearted to think that the Devil is the author and inventor of all happiness and delight to get hold of men's souls!"

"But, Fergus," said the Master, "it's you that's narrow-hearted and low-minded, to think that what may suit you should suit all. Ye cut other folk's breeks by your ain measure."

"And a fine big measure it is!" exclaimed O'Rhea.

"Maybe so, Fergus, maybe so, but everybody can not wear them."

"Well, well," said Fergus, leaning his chin in his palm and speaking in a tone of disgust, "I thought ye wanted the sun. I've offered ye everything sunny and sweet—without money and without price, begad!—and ye won't have it! I know the place for you, bedad!" said he, rousing himself, and turning with another flash of thought upon the Master. "They're islands that the Devil, I fancy, would give a wide berth to. There are so many devils *there* already. Your brother George and I were wrecked there sailing from Singapore to Calcutta. It's just the place, by Jove! for old Chartists and philanthropists, and creatures of that sort. I've heard John Company is going to send his Indian convicts there. That 'ud be the place for you, Hutcheon—*Andaman*. Mangrove and banyan trees growing up and then growing down"—he used his arms to illustrate the double growth—"the little savage imps of natives behaving in much the same confounded perverse way—hardly ever the right end uppermost. But you could tame them and

teach them, as Robinson Crusoe tamed Friday. That would give your spare time plenty to fill it, and philanthropists and Chartists, and old aristocrats with new notions, are so damned fond of improving all kinds of savages. By G—d, yes! And you'd have plenty of work, and plenty of sunshine too! The very place for you, I should say."

"What call ye the place?" asked the Master, with severe look and serious tone.

"*Andaman*," answered O'Rhea. He took the book from Hamish's loose fingers, turned to the fly-leaf, and with a charred stick wrote, while he sniggered uncontrollably, ANDAMAN, in letters tall and rude.

Hamish passed the book on to the Master. O'Rhea, after his spasm of sniggering, fixed his eyes listlessly on the fire, while his hairy, freckled hands—with the long-stemmed pipe between the finger and thumb of the right—drooped nervelessly over his knees. He remained thus for a minute or more silent and inert, and seemed scarcely to breathe. Suddenly a shiver passed through him and shook him to the heart with such violence that its agitation was communicated to the loom against which he sat.

"My God!" he cried between chattering teeth. "It has got me after all!"

In a little while they conveyed him upstairs and put him to bed in the Master's bed-chamber.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### VISIONS AND DREAMS.

FERGUS O'RHEA lay sick of ague in the Master's bed-chamber for several days, and during the latter part of the time guest and host had plenty of opportunity of understanding each other's mind. O'Rhea continued deeply con-

cerned to become completely acquainted with the desires and designs which, he could see, were seething and fermenting within the Master. He tried by frankness of speech to induce frankness—by confidence to beget confidence; but therein he made a mistake, for his frankness and confidence were of such a sort as rather sealed up than opened any desire the Master might have to communicate all that was in his heart. The truth is, they cherished different views and ideals of life. O'Rhea, while possessed of great intelligence and intellectual energy, and a frank and taking manner, was by nature and practice gross and sensual, and that to such an essential degree that he did not understand that any man at bottom could desire other things in life than those he desired. The Master, on the other hand, was romantic and something visionary, and though by no means wanting in passion and in appreciation of the "mercies" which so much engrossed O'Rhea's attention, he was repelled and made reserved by the direct grossness with which O'Rhea talked of the gratification of the appetites. He did not reproach O'Rhea for possessing and cherishing these desires and ideals; he only declared they were not his, that he would have neither part nor lot in them, and was reticent more and more about the things he himself desired and hoped for.

"It's plain to me," said he finally, when O'Rhea had set before him in detail for the fifth or sixth time the attractions of a life of complete surrender to indulgence—"Love and Plenty, sir!"—among the islands of the Southern Seas, "that the Almighty has made us different. I'm not without my feelings about they things, but it would be neither good for me nor for others to settle down and wallow in a life of that kind. I'm not blaming you for thinking it fine, but it's not a life that's meet for me and them I think o'; if I thought I could take up with it kindly, I'd be feared for myself and for them. No, Fergus, we can never agree about it. I do not like it, and it would be better that ye should say no more to me about your Paradises and your brown beauties. I'm not hankering after being Adam in the Garden o' Eden with a naked brown woman for Eve."



"Hutcheon," exclaimed O'Rhea, "I believe ye're not a man at all!"

"Maybe so, Fergus," said the Master proudly, "maybe so. But at least I'm not the man you'd have me be."

So it happened that the Master kept to himself what was working in his heart then, and for some time he had no further opportunity for talk with O'Rhea. When O'Rhea was able to leave his bed, the Master took him to a little house of his own on the edge of the wide moss beyond "Freedom" and the wood of Maiden Craig. House and holding were all that remained of the ancient property of the Masters of Hutcheon. They were "feu'd," or rented, by a worthy crofter commonly known as Holy Willie, who once or twice a week came to Ilkastane, on his way to the market of Inverdoon, with butter and potatoes. In Holy Willie's cart, then, O'Rhea made the journey to the house by the moss, where he was to recover himself on fresh air, buttermilk, and oatmeal. The Master walked beside the cart with the crofter, while Hamish (who made holiday) rode in the cart with O'Rhea. When he had seen the convalescent comfortably settled he set out with Hamish for the four-mile walk home.

It was a sunny afternoon, spring was in the air, and the stimulating resinous odour of the fir-trees in their nostrils. They hurried away from the dark, melancholy moss, and avoiding the high road passed through the wood of Maiden Craig to make a short cut to "Freedom." The sun shone softly through the gaps among the fir-trees, and stretched beams of brightness across the hollow-sounding floor of fir-needles; the breeze rustled and soughed around, and the cushat-doves cooed to each other in the shy distance. The seduction, the melting charm of Nature was upon the Master without his being quite aware of it. He stopped and looked about him, and then he sat down with Hamish for a little while; and all the sounds of the wood made music in his ears and in his heart. The wind streamed overhead in the tops of the trees, now like the rush of many waters and anon with the soft, long sigh of one turning in sleep, and steadily through its majestic ebb and flow were heard the

small accents of the secret life and industry of the wood—the dropping of fir-needles on the floor, the rustle of insects, the peck and hop of birds; and all these sounds moved the Master, as if it were set music played expressly for him. He was grateful, and he rejoiced, for that music of Nature beguiled his thoughts from the everyday, sordid, and oppressive cares of the folk of Ilkastane into the high and delectable satisfaction with all things that live in the open air and sunshine—with the world as God made it, and not as man has marred it. He recalled a saying of his brother's in the striving and crying of the Chartist agitation—“*If we cannot grow and flourish in the old place, let us go away. There is plenty of good soil and air in the world yet.*” “Yes; let us go away,” he said to himself. “The folk are more and more encompassed and oppressed by new machines and new men that squeeze the life out of them. They have been reduced, as my family has been, bit by bit, from freemen of the moss, the wood, and the hill, till, bit by bit, they are becoming slaves of the loom, and they bend and strive in dark weaving-shops that smell of the tomb to keep body and soul together!”

“Hamish,” said he to the boy who sat beside him deep in *Robinson Crusoe*, which now accompanied him wherever he went, “Hamish, where's that name Fergus wrote?”

Hamish showed him the fly-leaf on which O'Rhea had scratched “ANDAMAN.” He looked at the word, and seemed to ponder every letter, while the boy watched him with growing interest.

“Are we gaun?” he asked at length.

“Gaun where, laddie?” said the Master.

“To that place,” answered Hamish, pointing to the name on the fly-leaf.

“There's no saying yet. I must think it ower, and learn about it, and syne we'll see. To go there would be a longer job than this jaunt we've made the day; it would be a bigger flitting than from one side o' the loan to the other, and that's the biggest most of the folk have seen.”

“I ken that fine,” said Hamish. “We'll ha'e to gang in a ship. And maybe we'll be wrecked, like Robinson Crusoe,

and get on an island a' by our lone and ha'e goats and parrots."

"Maybe, laddie, maybe. But my wits are all in a creel yet, and we must ca' canny. And by that token we must be daundering hame, for the gloaming's coming on."

They continued their way through the wood and came out upon "Freedom." "Freedom" was an expanse of common land, covered with whins and rowan-trees and creeping brambles in the dry and rocky parts, and with rushes and lush grass in the soft and boggy; and through "Freedom" the same burn babbled and brawled as afterwards visited Ilkastane and the town of Inverdoon. It was well known both to the Master and to Hamish, for there the Chartists had held meetings by day, and drilled with pike and banner by night, and thither the Ilkastane boys fled on school holidays to bathe and catch trout and water-rats, to make a blaze of whins or to gather "brummles" or bramble-berries. As the two, with their several memories, picked their way through it, a clear boyish voice was lifted up in the singing of "Green grow the rashies, O!" The singer was a tow-headed, bare-legged loon, accompanied by a collie dog, and driving home a couple of cows towards a thatched cottage on the hill. The song of the loon woke recollection and feeling in the Master. In that very place, on one of the rare days of the past when the serious business of Chartist agitation had been laid aside, he, his brother George, and O'Rhea, and Kitty M'Cree (Hamish's mother), and another lass or two had wandered gathering "brummles," and well he remembered his brother had sung that very song, "Green grow the rashies, O!" Then, thus unlocked, all the memories and feelings of that time swept over him like a flood—all the strivings and the cryings, all the revolt and hope, all the submission and despair—and while his heart burned within him, he shook himself, and struck his knotty, iron-shodded staff on the ground, and exclaimed to himself, "No, Geordie! The Cause shall not be lost! We'll find good ground and air and a fine sun to grow in yet! Andaman! It's Andaman!—Andaman's the place!"

In spite of his resolution to "ca' canny," to be moved

only by fact and by reason, the Master was the kind of man who attains an end or conclusion not by stages of arranged arguments, but by successive impulses of feeling; he was the man who acts not because he knows he is right, but because he feels he cannot be wrong. He was like a doubtful lover who, while appearing to seek cold matter-of-fact reasons for courting his mistress, is perversely increasing the blind ardours of his devotion. But why did Andaman thus attract all his hopes and enthusiasms?—why did he set his affections on a place of which he knew nothing? It was precisely (as it is in love) because the Master knew nothing of the place of his attraction, and imagined much, that it drew him as a divine land of peace and freedom, of sunshine and plenty. Those who are accustomed their lives long to hear and to read eloquent and picturesque words, can have but a faint idea of their effect on a sensitive imagination that has been little used to such impressions. O'Rhea's glowing descriptions became in the Master's mind a glorious, beckoning vision; for to his simple and eager imagination the contrasted views of the Golden Hesperides and of forbidding Andaman mingled and became one. He saw all in a shifting, unsettled order, but full of life and promise—a distant, sunny shore, with yellow sand, blue sky, and shimmering sea, cocoa-palms and mangroves, rest in the shade, and work among impish but harmless natives and poor convict exiles, who had been guilty of Chartism, or whatever was the equivalent of Chartism there. These impressions and visions he received with the freshness and readiness of youth, and cherished with the practical need of a full-grown and capable man to realise them.

So in imagination he saw his poor, lean folk transported somehow out of their present half-starved and wholly dispirited condition—Loudoun, M'Kay, Steven, and the rest, they and their wives and bairns, old and young, with Hamish of the yellow hair in the midst of them. Tamson and the Bailie and their kind would remain behind and make haste to be rich in their own selfish, grasping, commercial way; his folk would haste away to other riches—to such riches of body and mind that they need no longer

be harassed and worn with double toil in dark, unwholesome weaving-shops, nor driven to swallow drams by the pains of hunger and despair, nor longer live in dread of Tamson and the Bailie and starvation! They would sit in the liberal sunshine, with luscious fruits and sweet flowers around them, and with the sound of the loom—a new, a lighter, a glorified loom!—in their ears, while they worked, not with the hurried, feverish creak and clatter of the days of many yards and few pence, but with the firm, regular pulse of health! Yea, surely, it would be enough for a while that, after all their toils and fears, they should sit with folded hands, calm and contented in the sun, and be filled with gratitude for the balmy air which would make them as young again as if they had been blown upon by the breezes of the Kingdom of Heaven!—with wasted wives and bairns (and the M'Crees, and especially Kitty—daft, solitary Kitty—were certainly among them) to rest and be content—no more! Duties of work would arise when the time of rest was past; but meanwhile their right to a long Sabbath was clear, whose week of toil had been a lifetime long! Kitty M'Cree certainly was there, with all the pathos and terror of her look subdued and softened to something liker humanity; she was there, but was there not a flitting vision of another also—of a bright humming-bird of a woman, a little lady, winsome as the softest and sweetest breath of song that ever touched the heart, and yet awesome as an angel of God clothed with meekness and innocence?

Did the Master say anything of these things to himself? Did he formulate any sentences concerning them? He was mute. His imagination was of the old Egyptian sort that expressed itself in pictures. But his eyes and his countenance shone, and he strode along through “Freedom” with a light foot, twirling his knotty staff as he went, and sometimes making a cut with it at a prickly branch of whin that stuck across his path.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## AIMÉE'S AID.

THE Master of Hutcheon was no reader of books. It may seem a sin in the eyes of many, but it must be confessed. He possessed, however, an assortment of old volumes stoutly bound in calf, which he had inherited from his father and his grandfather. Some of these stood on a shelf in his sleeping-room, while others reposed in an oaken chest. Though he seldom read in any of them, he knew what they were, and their utility for practical purposes. Besides the *Poems of Ossian* and *The Poetical Works of Robert Burns*, there was nothing that could be called literature among them; the rest were *Biblia abiblia*—books that are no books—volumes of devotion, archæology, and topography, and among them the Master knew where to find when he sought. When he reached home with Hamish he went to the oak chest and took out a set of four stout volumes—*Cruttwell's Universal Gazetteer*, which its author declared had something to say of every place in the known world.

"Look up the place, laddie," said the Master to Hamish. "It'll be in the first volume."

"Whatna place?" asked Hamish.

"Hoot, toot," said the Master, with a touch of impatience. "Andaman, of course. Ye'll come upon it near the beginning—among the A's. A, N—An."

"Here it is!" exclaimed Hamish, "a long screed."

"Read it out," said the Master, leaning forward with his hands clasped to listen.

Hamish read the description of the situation of Andaman, and the size of the two islands, of which the writer incorrectly declared that Andaman consisted. ("Twa islands are there?" exclaimed the Master. "I hadna expected to be fashed wi' making a wale."\*) And then he came to this, which seemed to authorise what O'Rhea had said, and which

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\* Wale—Choice.

confirmed the Master's opinion of the desirability of the place. "*The inhabitants are of a gentle, harmless disposition, and employ themselves in cultivating their lands.*"

"That's it!" exclaimed the Master. "That's the very thing."

"*They raise great plenty of rice and fruit,*" continued Hamish, "*which they sell to European vessels which pass that way.*"

"Of course they do," said the Master. "Why should they no? Canny, eident\* creatures."

Hamish continued, and read a passage quoted from a Major Symes, which seemed to deny that the natives were either canny or industrious. There was an evident contradiction, after considering which the Master declined to give credit to the Major.

"That will not do," said he. "They canna be both gentle and harmless and at the same time fêrocious and lazy. I just think," he continued, addressing himself more than the boy, "what might be said about our folk here—'sair hadden down, lang-suffering, and eident,' their friends would say; 'rough, rebellious, drucken, and lazy,' the folk o' the town that dinna ken them would say. *We ken which is right. Na; the Major either doesna ken they creatures, or he has done them some wrang that gi'es him a grudge against them. Ca' on, laddie, and never heed the Major.*"

Hamish continued, but he came upon nothing that arrested interest until at the end he encountered the suspicion that the Andaman islanders were cannibals. Then he paused, and turned to the Master in terror.

"That," said he in a half-whisper, "is just like the black men that cam' to Robinson Crusoe's place!"

"Ay," said the Master, "I mind. They almost terrified the soul out o' him. But ca' on, let's hear; maybe that's the Major again miscalling them."

"*If it be so,*" continued Hamish (that is, if it be that the natives are cannibals), "*Major Symes thinks it may be owing to the want of other food rather than natural*

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\* Eident—Industrious.

*depravity.*' And that's a'," said Hamish, laying down the book.

"I was sure o't," said the Master. "There's the Major again."

"But," exclaimed Hamish, whose terror was little discounted by the assurance that it was only the Major had caused it, "if they kill us and roast us on a great brander, and eat us!"

"They'd ha'e to catch us first, my lad," said the Master. "We're no there yet; and if we were there, we'd ha'e a word or twa to spell over wi' them afore they had any chance o' brandering us. But they are gentle and harmless, and they grow plenty o' rice and fruit, says that bit ye read first; and if they're harmless they canna be ferocious, as the Major says; and if they grow enough fruit and rice to eat, what for should they eat ane another, as the Major says they do? Of course, it may be just because they ha'e no other kitchen.\* The Major may be right in that—though I ha'e no belief in't; but, if and supposing it's true, we'd soon learn them to get other kitchen to their cakes, so dinna be a frightened gowk. And let's think o' something o' mair consequence. There's no mention of the lord or king o' the islands. Wha do they belong to?—that's what I want to ken."

"Dinna they belong to the folk that bide there?" asked Hamish.

"It's likely they do, laddie, but the folk must ha'e ane to rule and guide them—a king, or lord, or leader—or else they're like no other folk that I ever heard o'. Now wha's he that speaks for them and acts for them?—that's what I want to ken."

"Maybe he's a she," said Hamish.

"Maybe so, laddie, maybe so. There are queens even among sauvage folk. But," said he, "there's nothing more to be got out o' this book. Ay, I see it's gey auld—eighteen hunder and eight; there's mony a thing has happened since that time, and kings come up and kings gane down, so we'll just put it back in the big kist."

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\* Kitchen—What is eaten as relish to dry bread.



For some time the two, the Master and the boy, discussed possibilities of further information concerning Andaman—discussed them gravely; for the Master, in his noble simplicity and general ignorance of the world, had an extraordinary opinion of the understanding and knowledge of Hamish; and Hamish on his part had always conversed so much more with the Master and other men than with mere boys, that he was completely self-possessed, frank, and “old-fashioned.” He suggested that they might ask questions of Major Symes, or of the minister who had written the book, but the Master pointed out that since the book was about fifty years old it was likely that the minister and the Major were both dead. Then Hamish impatiently demanded why they could not land in Andaman without asking leave of anyone, to which the Master replied that he thought it neither proper nor civil to settle down among any folk without permission, the rather that there would be a ship-load of them.

“How would we like it,” said he, “if a curn o’ Andaman folk came and sat down among us here in Ilkastane without a ‘by your leave’?”

So the discussion stood still for want of matter, and the darkness settled down, and Hamish received his oat-cake and milk and went to bed. Then the Master went and opened the little windows that looked upon the close, and leaned out in dreamy thought. All the anxious, painful, and sordid sounds of the life and industry of the place rose about him like reproachful or appealing spirits with wings. From the squalid tenements came the birr and boom of the rapid wheels at which the lean pale mothers toiled to wind the pirns to be consumed in the fathers’ shuttles, and from the weaving-shops rose the regular thump of the lays and creak of the treadles; the sound of the wheels was frequently interrupted in order that the mothers might scold or pacify their squalling, half-starved children, and the thud of the looms was often hushed by the necessity (as the Master well knew) of mending the rotten warp and weft of the Bailie served out by Tamson. He assuaged the pain that state of things caused him by fancying he could hear the

brisk and steady thump of the lays (with no irritating breaks because of rotten warp and weft) and the click of his own "Whamleerie" coming through wide-open doors and windows, in and out which wandered playful zephyrs laden with the scent of flowers and fruit, all mingling with the croon of a lullaby, the fresh laughter of children, the drowsy "a, b, ab" of boys and girls at school, and the gentle, soothing wash of a summer sea. All these desirable things were summed up in the one word "*Andaman*," which he repeated over and over again to himself, as a lover, who dreams of the toil and bliss of the future, murmurs the name of his sweetheart as in itself expressing all.

"I must and will find it out," said he, giving way to a fresh impulse.

On a sudden thought he closed the window, seized his bonnet and staff, and set off at a quick pace out of the close and down the loan. He could not, even if he would, ask any questions of O'Rhea that night; but he had bethought him that George Lepine was well educated and possessed many books, and that therefore the information he desired might be got from him. He marched along the Burnside and entered the shadowed gate of Corbie Ha', tramped over the grass-grown gravel, and pulled the great bell handle at the big hall door. The bell clanged loudly within, the melancholy Jaques opened the door, and the dim light of the hall flowed forth. The Master inquired if young Mr. Lepine were within.

"No, sir," answered Jaques, peering to recognise the visitor, "he is not. *Monsieur le Bailli* and Monsieur George remain in the town for the banquet which is this night. What name, sir?"

"Hutcheon," answered the Master, "the Master of Hutcheon;" for he conceived it well to be on his dignity with people who made themselves great by doubtful means.

"Oh, *Monsieur le Maître*," exclaimed Jaques, "*Monsieur le Bailli* and Monsieur George will be desolate!"

"Who is it, Jaques?" asked a sweet, female voice, and Aimée appeared in her bright, humming-bird attire.

"It is *Monsieur le Maître*, mademoiselle," answered Jaques, promptly standing aside.

The Master and Aimée were then face to face. The Master took off his bonnet and bent himself before the little lady.

"Ah, it is you!" she exclaimed, and impulsively held out her hand. "How do you do? Father will be very much disappointed."

"I am disappointed too," said the Master, "but it was your brother I wished to have a word with."

"Perhaps I can tell him—perhaps you can tell me," she said, thinking that what the Master had to say to George must concern Elsie, whom she now knew all about. "Will you not come in?"

It occurred to the Master that she, who had but just finished her school training in such centres of knowledge and culture as Edinburgh and Paris, might be able to answer his questions as well as her brother could, and there was no doubt that it would be more agreeable to talk to her, the bright, winsome bird, with the sweet voice and the frank and sparkling eye! the charming wee lady who, in spite of his suspicion and dislike of her father, made his heart bow in tender homage, and his pulse throb faster and stronger.

"I thank ye," said he; "I'll just step in for a minute."

She tripped, and he followed, into the drawing-room, and though the Master had never in his life before seen such wealth and elegance of furniture, carpets, and mirrors, he showed no unusedness or awkwardness. He would have thought shame to be impressed by a display of braws got together by means which he despised. He so completely ignored the magnificence around him that Aimée (who was rather proud of the drawing-room) thought he must, of course, be accustomed to greater magnificence far. Why should he not, since he was a count, or something of the kind? He stood and looked down upon her from his great height with a smile of chivalrous indulgence which piqued her. She would at least reduce him to more of a level with herself.

"Will you not sit down?" said she.

Yes, the Master would sit down—on a chair that looked substantial enough to bear the weight of his bulk, with his sinewy hands clasped on the head of his staff, and his bonnet on his knee.

"I am thinking," said he, with a smile which Aimée thought lit up his whole countenance divinely, "that ye might be able to tell me what I've come to ask about."

"Something about Elsie?" said she, with an involuntary smile in answer to his.

"About Elsie!" exclaimed he, in surprise. "No, about Andaman. But is anything wrong about Elsie?"

"Not as I know," answered she. "She is coming here to-morrow—it is arranged—and then I shall not be alone any more."

"And," said he with a singularly wistful look, "I daresay ye'll like that."

"Yes, I daresay I shall. But what is Andaman, if you please?"

The Master was delighted to be able to instruct her that Andaman was an island, or islands, in the Bay of Bengal and not far from India—"where," said he, "my brother George—the same name as your brother's—has just died"—that Andaman was one of the most desirable places on the earth's surface, possessing freedom and content, sunshine and breeze, and inhabited only by a handful of droll, harmless natives of small stature. He was surprised and pleased with his own eloquence and the interest he aroused in the winsome young lady.

"But," said she, "you know all that about it, and you wish to know more from me! But me, I know nothing about it!" and she laughed lightly. "I had not heard even the name till you told me."

"That's a very great pity," said he, and inwardly he wondered that the young lady's education should have been so neglected.

"But what more is there to know about it than you know?" she asked. "You seem to me to know all about it."

"There's a hantle more to know," said he. "But I wish to know now in particular who the place belongs to."

"Who it belongs to?" she exclaimed. "But do you wish to buy it, Mr. Hutcheon?"

"Buy it? I doubt it would stick me to buy it—though I do not know. That's not a bad notion you've started, my young leddy."

"And," said she, considering him, "would you go away and live there?"

"I might," said he, with the constraint and shyness of one who has been suddenly found out in a secret love affair. "Maybe. But I've settled nothing. It's a new notion; it's a dream that has come over me."

"And would you go away all alone?"

"Alone! No, God forbid! The folk would go with me—the weavers o' Ilkastane and their wives and bairns—a' to be happy and halesome and content together. But it's a' in the clouds yet. I'm just turning the notion over and over. I ought to say nothing about it yet."

"Oh, please tell me, Mr. Hutcheon," said Aimée, impulsively. "Are the people in Ilkastane very unhappy now, then?"

Then he opened his heart to her, and told of all the troubles of the weavers and their families, their endless toil and their poverty. And who, she demanded with indignation, made them work so hard for so little? The Master looked at her in pity and tenderness, for he could not tell the innocent and winsome young lady that her father was their great oppressor. Prompted by his tender regard for her, he hit upon an answer which had wider and deeper truth than that which had first occurred to him. The tendency of industry was all against the folk, he said in effect; everywhere steam-machines were pushing human hands aside without pity and taking their place, so that those who had been taught the old crafts found less and less to do. The terrible change, he said, had been coming on gradually with ever-growing force; and then he told her of the Chartist agitation and rising which had ended eight years before, from which the folk had hoped so much, but

which left them more oppressed and sorer "hadden down" than before.

"Ah, yes," said Aimée, flushed with interest, "I remember at the same time there was the Revolution in Paris. I had then twelve years. I was at school. It was terrible! Was it a Revolution here also?"

"We went a good many steps that way," said the Master, "but we didna get the length of a Revolution."

And he told her how what promised to be a Revolution was broken up, how some were arrested, tried, and transported, and others escaped and fled over sea, among whom was his brother now dead; and then, since she still listened with the extremest interest and sympathy, he continued to tell her—he could not help it—of the privations of the weavers at that time and until now, when fairer prospects were dawning and he would be able to put an end to the toils and oppressions they had endured.

"It is very, very good of you!" she exclaimed with a tear in her eye.

"Nothing of the kind, Miss Aimée," said he, simply. "It's only proper and right for me to do what I can for them. They're my own folk. Their forbears served mine faithfully by road and by stile, with hand and with blood; they worked for them and fought under them in the days of lang-syne."

Aimée looked at him with admiration and homage which she found it hard to conceal.

"Of course," said she, "you are"—a count or something she was about to continue; but she suddenly thought that would not be a nice thing to say, and she added instead—"able to do many things to help them. But why must you take them far, far away to that place Andaman?"

"Well," said he, "I see nothing other for it if they are not to be clean whirled away in the spate of all this new, rushing kind of business that's coming all over them and round about them. I cannot tell ye everything that makes the flitting a needcessity"—he was thinking of the theft of his "Whamleerie."

"It's very nice and kind of you to have told me so

much. I had no business to have asked you so many questions; and now, after all, I can't tell you what you want to know."

"I am really and truly sorry for that. And," he continued, considering her till she blushed under his gaze, "I kenna how I've come to say so much. It's the plain truth," he declared with simple earnestness, "that I've not said so much to a single soul. But when once I began and saw you hearkening, like an angel in a picture"—Aimée blushed with delight—"I could do nothing but pour it out. It's a doom's wonder!" he exclaimed to himself.

"Perhaps," said she, "you are sorry you have told me."

"Sorry? No, no! It has been the wale o' pleasures to see ye hearkening with your heart in your een. But I'll ask a favour of you, Miss Aimée—that ye say nothing of all I have said to any other creature, nothing for a while, at least, because, ye see, there's nothing settled; it's all in a creel."

Aimée readily promised. She did not perceive how secret sharing made an easy and perhaps dangerous bond of intimacy, and, to do him justice, no more did the Master.

"I'm loth, though," said he reflectively, "to go to my bed the night without getting an answer to that question I came with."

"I wish I could help you to get an answer," said she. "Perhaps I can. Let me see." And she gathered her pretty black brows in thought. "Suppose we first look at an atlas. George has a large new one."

At once she rose and tripped out of the room, and Hutcheon, left to himself, wondered, and did not cease to wonder, at the pitch of confidence he had so soon arrived at with this simple and charming young lady. "She's the bonniest bird and the most winsome I ha'e ever seen," he said to himself, and straightway she reappeared, bearing a large atlas. The Master might then have paid her a very pretty compliment, and declared what a privilege it was for the world to be borne in the arms of an innocent maid, instead of, as of old, on the shoulders of a groaning giant; but the little classical lore the Master had picked up in his youth

had long been forgotten, and he only rose now and in silence took the burden from her. She cleared a place on the table, and he set the atlas down.

"Now," said she, "we must find the map of India, I suppose." India was found, and after a little search the desired islands. "Here," said she, laying a little pink nail on the place, "is your Andaman; three, four islands, and one or two little ones."

The Master gazed with all his eyes at the place of his hopes.

"It is here!" she exclaimed. "Bravo! '*British possessions coloured red.*' Andaman belongs to us—to the Queen. Your question is answered, Mr. Hutcheon. I am so glad I've helped you after all."

"Most astonishing! Red. So it is, like a soldier's jacket!" he exclaimed. "I would not have thought the answer could have been so easily got at. I am very much obliged to ye. Ye have been very kind in hearkening to my havers, and in helping me to an answer."

He did not sit down again. His business was done, and his desired information was complete.

"So," said he, half to himself, "it's to the Queen that one must make application about the place."

He thanked the bonny bird again, pressed her little hand in his, and took his leave; and the bonny bird sat down, flushed and wondering, with a hundred new bright thoughts and fancies hovering about her.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE BOY AND THE MAN.

THE Master was a puzzle to himself that night. When he left Corbie Ha' and returned along the Burnside with springy step, bounding pulse, and beckoning hope,



he did not know what had raised him to such a pitch of ecstatic pleasure—whether his confidential interview with the winsome Aimée or the discovery of the fact he had gone in search of. But he was certain that two names were burning one over the other on his heart in letters of fire; both began with an “A,” and both seemed related with the verb *Amo-amavi-amatum-amare*, of which the Master remembered sufficient to recall to himself, with a smile, that it has a gerund *amandum*, and with a little twining of syllables there was little difference between “*Amandum*” and “*Andaman*.” He sat long over his frugal supper of oat-cake and skim-milk cheese, gazing the while at the fire. As he sat, a cinder shot out at him. He picked it up, and examined it in the light of his candle. It was plainly a boat—either a boat or a coffin—signifying surely that he was destined to sail over sea, or to perish in the attempt. He tossed the cinder back into the fire, and laughed to himself with a little sneer at his superstition. Such signs and presages, he had often remarked, are always ambiguous—two-faced or two-voiced temptations of the “juggling fiends that palter with us in a double sense.” But he was that night filled with life and hope of a wonderful newness, and was not to be moved by any interpretation of signs and tokens in the heavens above or in the earth beneath; those who fash their thumbs about omens and forebodings are the uncertain, the insecure, the dejected, or the sick. So the Master went to bed, humming in a tenor voice :

“Ca’ the yowes to the knowes,  
Ca’ them whaur the heather grows,  
Ca’ them whaur the burnie rows,  
My bonnie dearie.”

But the Fate that sat weaving the web of the Master’s destiny had already resolved that it was not to be all composed of fine, ethereal gold; already she was preparing to run in coarse and contrary and knotty threads to spoil its fine texture.

In the morning, when they sat over their porridge—the Master and his young charge—Hamish, with the morning

necessity of all young creatures to be chirping and chattering, plied his patron with questions and remarks. Had he found out yet who was the owner of Andaman? Very likely the schoolmaster would know; should Hamish ask him? or would the Master write the question down? Perhaps the schoolmaster would take more notice if the Master wrote. To all which Hutcheon replied vaguely—for not half his attention was given to the boy—that there was no need to ask the schoolmaster; that, indeed, he would not like the matter mentioned to the schoolmaster; that he had already found the answer to the question. And what was the answer? Oh, the answer was that Andaman was “red,” Andaman belonged to the Queen.

“Hooray!” cried Hamish. “Now we can gang; we can spier at the Queen to let us, instead o’ having to conquer they funny little black men.”

“Conquer the black men? What the sorrow do you mean, laddie?” demanded the Master.

“When folk gang to bide in a place without leave they aye conquer the folk that’s there, dinna they?”

“Faigs, laddie,” exclaimed the Master, “but ye ha’e begun in good time wi’ your conquering! Go ‘wa’ wi’ ye to your school, and tell the dominie to learn ye better manners! Ye’ll be for drilling us a’ wi’ guns and pikes next! Go ‘wa’ to your school! It’s time.”

Hamish rose with an astonished and sore heart. Never before had the Master spoken so sharply to him, and he had been expecting that henceforward all day and every day was to be occupied with preparations for the voyage to Andaman. No more school, no more anything but *Robinson Crusoe* and Andaman! Hamish was commonly docile enough, and too much interested in school learning to seek to play truant; but this sudden revulsion was too great for him. He flung his school-satchel over his shoulder and went out, but he did not—he could not—go to school, for he had prepared no lessons. He lingered a moment or two in the loan, and then, catching sight of Holy Willie’s cart, he bethought him of O’Rhea and O’Rhea’s words—“Stick to me and you’ll be all right.” His resolve was taken; he

would go to O'Rhea, who was almost as good company as *Robinson Crusoe* himself, and talk with him about Andaman. Away he galloped up the loan, and without hesitation took the road to the house on the margin of the moss. The way was long, but the morning was bright, birds sang overhead and twittered in bush and tree, the grass grew green, lambs gambolled in the fields beside their mothers, and Hamish prevailed on a wandering collie to accompany him part of his way.

With all these pastimes and seductions Hamish did not reach the house by the moss till the middle of the forenoon. O'Rhea was sitting at the door smoking, with dissatisfied slumberous eye on the prospect; a dung-heap on which fowls lazily scratched and pecked, a dabble where ducks splattered and guzzled, and away beyond the dark, treacherous moss, or bog, with its white fluttering cotton-weeds, its brown stacks of peat here and there, its glittering pools, and its green quags, and still beyond the darker fir-woods against the bright sky. When he saw Hamish approach he took the pipe from his mouth and waited with gathered and attentive brows.

"Well, my boy," said he, when Hamish stood before him, "what's happened? What are ye doing here? Where's the Master? Twisting webs? patching whamleeries? or hatching other folks' eggs, eh? Sit down and tell me all about it."

He gripped the boy's arm with affection and twisted him round to the bench beside himself. And then he saw his school-satchel.

"Hallo!" said he. "What? Playing truant again?" He leaned his elbows on his knees and looked into the boy's face, to which a grubby hand was raised to rub a knuckle in the eye. "Come, come, never fear. Don't pipe your eye. Here's a handkerchief. Oh, you've one of your own. All right. Wipe it, and let's say no more about it."

But having the sore spot of his conscience once touched, Hamish could not but cry out. He declared he had had no intention of playing truant; he had not expected to have to go to school and had prepared no lessons, and then the

Master had told him he must go. But why, O'Rhea asked, had he expected another holiday?

"Because," answered Hamish, "I thought we were a' gaun to get ready to gang to Andaman."

"What's that? Going to Andaman? Who are going to Andaman?"

Then Hamish poured out the whole matter with which he was bursting—how the Master was always speaking and seemed always thinking of Andaman since ever O'Rhea had mentioned the place; how they had sought it out and read about it in the *Gazetteer* the evening before; how the Master was bothered to find out to whom it belonged, so that he might ask permission to go; and how that morning he had said he had found the place belonged to the Queen.

"And so, then," said O'Rhea, "when you were sent off to school, and thought it was all up with Andaman, you came out to me to talk about it?"

Hamish nodded and put his handkerchief away.

"Do you think we can gang?" he asked with a timid wistfulness.

"Gang? Of course. But let me think about it."

"Ye baith say that," observed Hamish. "The Maister aye says he maun think about it."

"Does he so?" quoth O'Rhea. "Well, you're a good boy, a fine boy," and he patted his head and stroked his hair, "to come and tell me, because, d'ye see, I'm the man that knows all about it."

"I ken that," said Hamish. "Ye ken as muckle as Robinson Crusoe."

"I do that, my boy—and more too. You stick to that. Now you must have a piece and a drink of milk, and then we'll set away back together."

While Hamish ate his oat-cake and drank his milk, O'Rhea questioned and cross-questioned him, and then he sat and smoked and thought. If I have at all succeeded in showing the kind of man O'Rhea was, the tenor of his thoughts will readily be guessed. For some reason or another he conceived he had a right to the enjoyment of a liberal share of the fortune left to the Master by his brother,

and seeing no way of enjoying his share except by participating in such schemes of expenditure as the Master meditated, and being also masterful by nature, he was resolved that Hutcheon should spend in the way O'Rhea thought best. He had seen he could not prevail with the Master by bullying or by bluff; he must, therefore, prevail and get his own way by craft. And he had the advantage of the Master—as the average sensualist must ever have over the idealist—in that he exactly knew what he really wanted. He was by predestination and by practice an adventurer and a ruffler; the bonds and trammels of civilised society were exceedingly irksome to him, and worse than irksome were the disease and ague that racked his bones and poisoned his blood and frequently flung him prostrate, and from these he had never known complete deliverance and emancipation except among the islands of the Southern Seas. He was fully bent, then, on returning thither—as earnestly bent and with as much pre-occupation as the pietist is bent on reaching heaven. His heart and his flesh cried out for the health and delight of Polynesia, and all other considerations he would sacrifice to attain them. Moreover, he had a complete scheme for aggrandisement and enjoyment there, which he had resolved that the Master's fortune should pay for; and since the Master was not easily to be separated from his fortune, the Master and his fortune must go with him together.

By what means of craft was the Master to be worked into complicity with his purpose? Hutcheon seemed to be uncertain about Andaman, notwithstanding his enthusiasm, so that if O'Rhea, as matters were, pretended to go heartily with him in his dream of migration thither, there was no kind of surety that he might not any day declare that the plan and the preparations were "off"; for many things might happen to show the undesirability or folly of a migration of the Ilkastane folk. How, then, could the Master be bound down to go through with a plan once it was fixed? O'Rhea gnawed his thumb inside and out while he fiercely turned that over in his mind. At length he snapped his fingers and slapped his great hands together.

"By Gor!" he exclaimed, "I have it. 'The Lord's Anointed'! Tamson, I thank thee for that word!"

Then he fell silent again, but in his fierce agitation he gnawed his thumb all round. It seemed, however, he was only waiting for the boy, for he glanced at him now and then, and when the oat-cake and milk were all dispatched he rose to his feet, saying, "Come on, my son. We must be setting home now."

Hamish looked at him. He had taken his staff in hand, and was stepping out with a very bright, resolute eye. He paused and held out his hand for Hamish to lay hold, and they set forth together.

"Are ye gaun to tell on me?" said the boy presently.

"Tell on you?" exclaimed O'Rhea, passing his hand tenderly about Hamish's shoulder. "You're a clever boy now, and can see farther into things than most boys. Well, I need only point out to you that, if we don't tell that you've been here instead of at school, Holy Willie's wife may, and we wouldn't like to be found out in a kind of lie, would we? You understand that. So you see it will be better to tell at once. The Master would not like it if he knew you had told me about Andaman before he has; and then he might say you shouldn't go to Andaman at all, and *you* wouldn't like that."

"But I *maun* gang," said Hamish, "if the Master gangs and a' the folk gang!"

"But supposing nobody goes, my son?"

"Ow!" cried Hamish in alarm.

"So we'll just say you came to hear some of my Crusoe stories."

"I'll just say nothing ava'," said Hamish, with a somewhat sulky look.

"Truthful boy!" laughed O'Rhea. "Stick to that. But it will be an awful disappointment if you don't go, won't it? No Crusoes, no parrots, no goats, no funny black natives. And you won't go if Hutcheon doesn't ask the Queen. If he writes to the Queen it will be all right; but if he doesn't, why, it'll be all wrong. You'll never go to lovely Andaman, but stay all your days in this cold, cloudy, stormy

country, eating bitter kail and gritty oat-cakes! Ugh! I could spit on myself for being here when I ought to be there!"

These words impressed Hamish deeply.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "I hope he'll write! But if he wiinna, couldna we get a boat and gang by oursel's?"

"No, no," said O'Rhea with decision. "We couldn't. How could we? through waves as high as houses, storms, rains, no money, and a biscuit a-piece? That wouldn't do at all. No. We must all go in a ship—a proper ship—a top-sail schooner, with everything handsome, along with the Master; *but* he must first write to the Queen, mustn't he? Oh, we can't let him miss writing to the Queen, can we?"

He urged these points with earnestness, pressing the boy's shoulder now and then, and watching his face till he saw an expression of seriousness and resolution finally settle upon it, and he said to himself, "Now the boy'll give him no peace till he writes."

So they trudged along the road through the dark wood of Maiden Craig, round the end of "Freedom," and on and on the weary way to Ilkastane. But O'Rhea beguiled the weariness of the way with stories of men and beasts, ships and coral islands—such stories as Hamish had never heard or read—and he imitated the growls of beasts and the cries of birds, so that you shivered with terror and delight. He was very kind to the boy; for when Hamish began to show signs of being footsore, he stopped, saying he would give him a "lift," were it not that he was himself so weak still (indeed, ever since they had set out, he had whipped out his great red handkerchief at intervals to wipe the perspiration that would spring on his face), but that, a "lift" being out of the question, they would sit down and rest awhile. When they had sat down, O'Rhea pulled off the boy's shoes and shook the dust out, set his stockings straight and pinched his calves, all with the attention and tenderness of a mother. While they rested O'Rhea smoked, and Hamish, in the easy intimacy established between them, chattered about all things with which he had acquaintance. O'Rhea listened with a smile of indulgence, and, to Hamish's sur-

prise, frequently hugged him to his side. When they set forth again, and had got within easy thought of Ilkastane, they both fell silent with anticipation of what they would say to the Master and what the Master would say to them.

"And so Hew Tamson's loon Tam is in the Post-Office, is he?" O'Rhea remarked suddenly with an odd twinkle of eye and great breadth of smile.

"Ay," said Hamish, "he's a clerk."

"Well, well," said O'Rhea, "you keep your weather eye open and you'll be better than a clerk. And mind—come to my shanty and tell me when the Master writes to the Queen. But mum's the word!"

## CHAPTER XX.

### "DEAR QUEEN—"

THE Master received the truant with a grave serenity, and O'Rhea, who declared he was "dying, Hutcheon—dying of the ague in my bones," pleaded for the tenderest treatment of Hamish, because he was a fanciful boy, who was bound to have maggots in his head ("bees in his bonnet," said the Master), but who had really no harm in him. The Master offered his friend a bed for the night, since he could not journey back that day to the house by the moss, but O'Rhea thanked him and declined, saying that he was well enough to go to his own shanty in the Bailie's bounds. So, after partaking hurriedly of the Master's kail, he departed and hastened to Tamson's, before that gritty and well-sanded person should have gone off to the mill again. What passed between him and Tamson? What could have passed between two such past masters in the arts of humbug, chicane, and self-advancement?

And Hamish? Hamish sat humbly under the Master's



grave displeasure, trying to take delight in *Robinson Crusoe*. He continued to glance at the Master with a question—a pressing question—in his throat; but the Master was closely occupied with repairing Kirsty Kyle’s wag-at-the-wa’ (he was always making or mending for the folk, thereby unconsciously fulfilling the Christian precept that he that will be “chiefest shall be servant of all”), and Hamish feared to open his mouth. By-and-by Hamish’s sighs and sniffs and fidgets attracted the Master’s notice, and he turned gravely to the boy and asked him if he was unwell. Then Hamish opened his mouth, and out flew his question.

“Aren a ye gaun to write to the Queen?”

“Write to the Queen?” asked Hutcheon. “What for, laddie?”

“Ow, Maister,” cried the boy, “to spier if we can gang to Andaman!”

The Master pushed Kirsty Kyle’s clock aside, and grasped his beard.

“I ha’e been thinking it over,” said he, “and it strikes me that the Queen may want a hantle o’ siller for the feu o’ the place, laddie.”

“But if we tell her,” urged the boy, “that a’ the folk are sair hadden down, and that M’Kay has the asthma, and Hay a terrible hoast?”

“Ay,” said the Master, “that might touch her; but she has a man, ye ken—the Prince Consort—Prince Albert—and I doubt we should write to him about bits o’ business, and he might na care the twirl o’ a teetotum for our asthmas and hoasts.”

“But ye could write to the Queen,” urged Hamish again, “as if ye didna ken she had a man. I dinna like spiering at men for things,” said he shrewdly. “I’m feared for men, but wives and ladies are good to me.”

“Dod, laddie,” said the Master with a grave, considering smile, “that’s no ill for you! Ye ha’e an auld-farrant head on ye, and a canny notion or twa in’t. Ye’ll be right, I’ve no doubt. It’ll be the same like as some folk think it’s better to pray to the Virgin Mary. Sae skirt awa’ wi’ ye,” said he, putting his hand into his pocket, “and buy some

note-paper and envelopes, the best cream, and we'll set about the letter to the Queen."

Hamish flew with the money in his hand, downstairs, out of the close, and away down the loan towards the town, for no cream-laid could be bought in Ilkastane. His flying feet were just turning the end of the loan, past Lucky Fraser's dram-shop, when a voice hailed him.

"Hallo! Heely, heely, my son, where are ye off to at that rate?"

It was the voice of O'Rhea. Hamish stopped.

"To buy cream paper," he answered in a tone of confidence and haste; "we're gaun to write to the Queen."

"Oh," said O'Rhea, and his eye flashed. "Away with you then!"

In half-an-hour Hamish was returning at a weary trot, and again O'Rhea met him.

"Haven't you been quick!" said the big man, stopping him and patting his shoulder. "So the letter's going to be written. And you'll run to the post with it, I suppose. To be sure you will, because, d'ye see, if you post it yourself you'll be certain sure it'll go."

The Master's hand was little used to writing, its hold of the pen was cramped and awkward. But he set himself to his task with seriousness and deliberation, while Hamish knelt on a chair on the other side of the table, Kirsty Kyle's old clock lay silent on the carpenter's bench and seemed to gaze up through the skylight, and the afternoon sun shone through the little window that looked upon the close.

"Oh," cried Hamish, "I wish I could write it, Master."

"Write instead o' me, d'ye mean, laddie? That would not be proper at all, for 'honour to whom honour is due'; but if ye like ye can write a letter o' your ain."

"Can I?" exclaimed Hamish, and in a twinkling he was squared before a sheet of paper, with a steel pen in his hand. The Master followed old ways and preferred a quill.

And this is the letter which Hamish evolved with infinite pains:

"DEAR QUEEN: I write these few lines to let you know that we are in good health, hoping you are enjoying the same great blessing, thank God for it." [Hamish thought that was a polite formula with which every letter must open.] "But I have to tell you that M'Kay has the asthma and Hay a terrible hoast, and all the folks are sore holden down with weaving the webs of the Bailie Lippen. Steven by ordinar, because his weaving is coarse and he only gets twopence a yard. And the Master says the wives have too muckle to do, and the bairns have not near enough porridge and kail. So we would like terrible well to go to Andaman and be wrecked and never come back—I mean me and the Master and F. O. and all the rest—if your Gracious Majesty would be so kind as to let us. So if you will, be so good as write and say.—I remain your affectionate Boy and Subject,

"HAMISH M'CREE.

"P. S.—The Master is the Master of Hutcheon, and he has plenty of siller that his brother left him."

Hamish handed his letter proudly to the Master as soon as it was finished.

"What's this?" exclaimed the Master. "'Dear Queen!' Ye maunna say that, laddie! Ye might be a crowned head yoursel', writing like that!"

"The schoolmaster says it's polite to begin wi' 'Dear,'" said Hamish.

"But to the Queen, wha is a lang sight aboon ye, ye maun be humble. Ye should say something like, 'May it please Your Majesty,' or 'If it like Your Gracious Majesty.'"

"I've said 'Gracious Majesty' down there," exclaimed Hamish eagerly.

"So ye have." The Master read on with a smile, but without further comment until he reached the mention of "F. O." Said he, "Wha's that? Oh, ay, I mind. But wha told ye that Fergus wants to go to Andaman? I canna believe it."

"He told me himsel'," said Hamish.

"Oh, he did, did he? That beats me. But, oh, ay, your

letter'll do fine. It'll be plain that it's written out o' your own head. Though I think ye must cut out 'write and say.' Ye mustna ask a Queen to 'write and say'! The Queen has servants and chamberlains and clerks to do a'thing for her. Ye should write like a gentleman, and leave it to the leddy whether she'll tak' any notice o' what ye've written. Ye'd better make a clean sweep o' that. Set your elbows straight, dight your pen neb, and at it again. And no so many tirlie-wirlies at the end o' your words. Just be simple and honest, upright and downright, wi' your hooks and hangers. It looks more like the hand o' a gentleman, and no so like the scribe o' a bit clerk in an office."

While Hamish was re-writing his letter the Master continued his own laborious composition. It was laborious because he was unused to industry of that kind, and because he was taking great pains to set down an exact statement. But, in spite of the toilsomeness of his endeavour, cheerfulness and conviction grew as he went on; for as he felt his case take shape under his hand, he became completely assured of its weight and worth, and as he made his petition for leave to go to Andaman he easily slipped into the belief that it was already as good as granted. So much so that when he had finished he exclaimed, "There, now, that's settled."

It would be tedious to set forth his letter in full, for it covered ground already familiar to the reader, and it was charged with utterances which the reader has already heard. He quaintly and simply wrote at the head of his epistle, "*To Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria from her loyal liege James, the Master of Hutcheon, with leal Homage and Service.*" He then began, "*Madam, Your Majesty will know—*" all, in fact, about the Masters of Hutcheon, taking it for granted that the roll of Her Majesty's nobility must ever be before her, just as a Calvinist might suppose that the names of the Elect dwell ever in the mind of God. He reminded Her Majesty that the last publicly known Master of Hutcheon had been attainted and his lands forfeit for complicity in the '45; and he then went on to declare

how the attainted Master had hidden himself and his rank and the few people who had fled with him among the weavers of Ilkastane, how they finally became weavers and dwelt there, and how they and theirs ever after felt bound in gratitude to those who had received and befriended them. That statement being made as exactly and clearly as possible, he continued that, as the representative of his family, he reckoned himself responsible for these people and was resolved to deliver them from the evils that in these latter days were overtaking them. Their industry was being filched from them more and more by machinery and steam, and from bold, self-respecting freemen they were becoming bond-slaves. He wished, therefore, to take them away from all contact with the new things that oppressed them, and he begged Her Majesty's permission to take them to that island of Andaman of which he had heard. And finally he declared himself ready to pay a reasonable sum to Her Majesty—if Her Majesty so desired—for the feu of such lands as they might need; he presumed that "in a savage island" like Andaman land could not yet have become very costly.

All things being at length ready—his own and Hamish's productions being gone through again, and then put into an envelope—the Master sealed the packet with the great copper seal that hung at his fob, addressed it to "*Her Majesty, Queen Victoria, at Windsor Castle, England,*" and said, "Now we'll take it to the post." To that Hamish readily agreed; for surely it was better that the Master should keep him company to the post than that he should go alone, as O'Rhea had seemed to suggest. In those days there was but one post-office, and that in the centre of Inverdoon, at the top of Market Street, and thither the Master and his *protégé* set out by way of the noisome Burnside, where rats squealed and splashed and fought for garbage. The darkness was beginning to settle around, and to make the sights and sounds of the Burnside more fearsome, so that Hamish was glad of holding the Master's hand in comfortable security. And the Master was lighter of speech and gayer of manner than the boy had ever known him; for with the writing of

the letter he had purged his mind and heart of more oppression and hesitation than he had known had been there until they were gone. Now he had done what man could do, and he felt confident of the issue.

It was probably because he was in that light and friendly mood that he had no notable dislike and suspicion of Tamson's son, who came forward with a smile to the counter of the post-office.

"Is that you, Tam?" was the Master's greeting.

"Ay, it's just me, Mester Hutcheon," answered Tam. "I'm clerk here," he added proudly.

"Ay, man," said the Master, glancing around the lofty hall, "but it's a grand lift for your father's son. It's the new way—from bauchels\* to boots."

But the Master wished to buy stamps. "How many?" Tam Tamson asked. The master did not know.

"I'd better weigh your letter for ye," said Tam, holding out his hand.

With a touch of reluctance, because he did not wish the address to be seen, the Master handed over the packet, but face downwards. Tam had the grace to weigh it without looking at the superscription. But when he had weighed it he turned it up with an apology.

"I maun see where it's going," said he, "or I canna tell what stamps it'll need."

Upon that the Master blushed, but Tam did not change countenance. He merely affixed the stamp, said how much there was to pay, and put the letter aside.

"But," said the Master, "mustna I put the letter through the slit outside?"

"It'll be safer here," said Tam; "it'll be handier for going off."

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\* Bauchels are the heelless slippers or cut-down shoes worn by weavers at their work.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## HOW TAM WAS WON.

TAM TAMSON was a long youth of seventeen summers, with a sharp nose, a thin slit of a mouth, a red head, a smooth, conciliatory manner (even to little boys), and something of his father's genius for taking advantage of opportunities. At school he had read all the penny papers for boys which were then beginning to flourish (he did not buy them—he could not afford to—but he sat over them for hours in the shop of his uncle, who combined the selling of papers with the shaving of beards), and he retailed their stories in the playground to a select circle, the members of which each paid a halfpenny a week for the privilege of listening. In that Tam (as became his origin) combined pleasure with business; his study of boys' papers was not only a commercial speculation, it was also a labour of love. He first read the stories because he enjoyed reading them, and it was only by an after-thought that he made an income by re-telling them. Of all tales he favoured the piratical, and on school holidays he was the inspired leader (notwithstanding his quiet, smooth demeanour) of a band of straggling boys who infested the links and the sands and made pretence of being stranded mariners on a desert shore; and the folk of the fishing village at the mouth of the river never knew how near they had often been to the loss of a boat, that these sham mariners might fulfil their most daring ambition. Of course these "ploys" were laid aside when Tam became a clerk in the post-office—laid aside, but not forgotten; and it was his luck to have his memory of them revived by conversation with the much-travelled O'Rhea on the one or two occasions on which that remarkable adventurer visited the home of the Tamsons.

In acquiring Tam as a confidential agent, O'Rhea showed the faculty which great leaders have in choosing their instruments and setting them to work. Like a wary and judicious plotter, he had made Tam ready to his hand before he

had known in what way or how soon he would need him. He had perceived his bent, and had drawn it out and strengthened it. With a considering and, as it were, admiring eye on the red-headed, sharp-nosed Tam, he had told the story of Boyd, the great Scottish speculator in Australian land, the head of the Royal Banking Company of Australia, and the builder of Boydtown on Twofold Bay—Benjamin Boyd—whose fate had been in everybody's mouth two or three years before.

"The Scotchman is the billy to get on all over the world," said O'Rhea, addressing Tam's father in a style which he conceived was suited to his audience. "You remember hearing of Boyd?—Ben Boyd, that died the day before he'd have been the richest man in the world through the finding of gold in Australia? Of course you remember. Well, he began just a clerk, without a bawbee, like Tam here. Did I know him? Of course I knew him. I knew him in Australia, when he was cocking his beaver over all the colony, and I knew him out of Australia when he was at his best and showed the fine stuff he was made of. Ay, bedad! there's nobody like a Scotch Sandy for gripping on and getting on. What do ye think Ben Boyd does when he is broken up for the time in Australia? He buys a fine top-sail schooner, called *The Wanderer*, of two hundred and forty tons register, fits her up handsome like a yacht, but arms her well too, and fills her with trade stuff, and away he sails out into the South Seas to trade among the islands, and to do a little of anything else that might come in the way of a free-handed gentleman." A few minutes later, when he had chanced to have Tam alone, he had looked on him with an approving smile, and said: "I can see what you're thinking. You might be a Ben Boyd yourself; but do you know what the best part of Ben's time was? The last. In his top-sail schooner trading, and"—leaning forward and speaking in a whisper—"buccaneering a bit. I see you're a lad of understanding and wide reading. You know all about buccaneering, for you've read it, and the piles of doubloons you can make, and I know all about trading in the South Seas, for I've sailed them, and I know more



than that. I know what fortunes we could make and what fun we could have if we had a schooner like *The Wanderer*, and a devilish proper lad or two. We'll have a downright crony crack about that some day; and ye needn't tell your father, my son."

So on this memorable day when he had tramped in with Hamish from the house by the moss, and a plan of aggrandisement sprang ready armed from his head, as Minerva sprang from the brain of Jupiter, or rather as sin from the head of the Satan of Milton, O'Rhea blessed himself that he had had the foresight to make friends with Tamson's son, for he perceived that he was the very person to serve his immediate turn. When he had made sure that a letter to the Queen was going to be written, he dragged his stiff, rheumatic joints into the town and to the post-office. He entered to buy a stamp and to see Tam Tamson. Tam was behind the counter and came forward when he saw O'Rhea.

"Give me a Queen's head, Tam, my son," said O'Rhea, leaning over the counter; "and—here—oblige me with five minutes' conversation outside."

"I mustna go out," answered Tam. "What do ye want to say? Canna ye say't here?"

O'Rhea reflected a moment. He could not well say there all he wished to say. He could not produce all the effect he wished to produce.

"No," he answered; "it can't be done here. Ye must manage to get five minutes off. Say your uncle is on the point of sailing for the Gold Coast, and he wants to kiss ye before he goes—say anything, but come out and have a private word, or you'll ever after rue ye didn't, for this very day your fortune has begun to shoot up like young corn."

"If ye can wait half an hour," said Tam, "I'll ha'e my tea-time. Will that do?"

O'Rhea said that that arrangement must do, if no other was available, and told Tam to come to him at the end of the half-hour, across the way at the door of the market. And so he departed to wait the expiry of the half-hour. The market was a busy place, a great and comprehensive building. The basement was given over to the stalls of venders

of fish, wet and dry, the next floor to fleshers (or butchers) and green-grocers, the gallery above that to booksellers and dealers in fancy wares, and the gallery above that again to other sorts of merchants. O'Rhea wandered into the basement and the babel of the fishwives, who sat by their creels knitting stockings, now gossiping in a loud voice with each other and now inviting the passers-by to purchase their wares.

"Come awa', my bonnie man," they called to O'Rhea in the sing-song tone peculiar to the fisher-folk, "and buy my dulse\* and bather-locks. Buy finnan haddies the day; buy fine dry speldrins."†

He bought a pennyworth of dulse, and began to munch it; and the odour and savour of the sea went over him like a wave.

"Thank God, wifie," said he, "for the wide salt sea!"

"Ay, my man," said the fishwife, "and for a' the caller fish intil't, wi' their wide-open een and their bonny red gills, and for the labsters and partans and the Greenland whales. Ay, the sea's a grand place, though bonnie lads get drowned in't whiles, and the labsters and partans get fine farin'! Ye'll be a sailor man yoursel', and for the sea the night, maybe. Buy some finnan haddies, saxpence the bunch, just for a last jink afore ye put to sea; or buy some speldrins to eat to your last dram wi' your cronies on the shore; I'se warrant them grand for provoking a thirst."

"I'm not for the sea to-night, my woman," said O'Rhea, "nor for your haddies nor speldrins."

He received his change and passed on. Certain of the fishwife's words pleased him, while others disturbed him not a little. He did not relish being reminded just then of the dangers and horrors of the sea, but he was content that he seemed a sailor man, for that was the appearance that he especially wished to wear. There was much of the actor in him, and being assured that he looked like a sailor he began to think in sea phrases and to prepare to conduct his inter-

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\* Edible seaweed, or sea celery.

† Salted and sun-dried whittings.

view with Tam Tamson as a bold buccaneer. He gave thought to the kind of thing he must say to Tam, for he had absolute need of Tam's assistance, and he suspected that Tam would not be won over to his aid with complete ease. Tam, in spite of his youth and apparent ductility, had the eye of experienced and furtive timidity, and the nose of inherited and practised obstinacy.

He walked here and there in the babel and munched his dulse; and though he could not believe it possible that the letter to the Queen could come to the post so early, he made one or two excursions to the street to observe who entered the post-office. At the end of the half-hour Tam came. That he might not lose all the nutritive advantage of his tea-time, he asked O'Rhea to "bide a wee" while he bought something. He returned with speed, and they began their interview, pacing the basement, the one munching dulse and the other eating a scone. Tam said nothing but "I've got a quarter of an hour," and looked to O'Rhea to begin. O'Rhea glanced at him with a kind of ardour of surprise and admiration.

"Only a quarter of an hour for tea!" he exclaimed. "But I know you. A clever son of a gun like you would never stop in a small little berth like that if he hadn't his eye on a big thing in the future. That's all right and taut. But the future, my son, takes a long while and hard work to warp up to. Now, we've had a crack or two, you and me, and we understand each other. I understand you, and though you've never said it in so many words, I believe you'd have no objection to take a short cut to fortune, so long as it's safe."

"I should just think I hadna!" exclaimed Tam.

"Right you are," said O'Rhea, "and keep yourself up to wind'ard. Now I must plump into business, because the time's short. I'm trusting you more than I've ever trusted any mother's son. I like you, and I've taken to you, and I want you to share in a big thing I mean to pull off. First of all, I must have your word that you keep all we say to yourself—not a breath of it even to your father." Suspecting a shrinking of timidity in Tam, he continued, "Not

that I'm afraid, but because, as you'll see presently, it would spoil everything if our business got talked about." Tam promised the strictest secrecy, and O'Rhea went on. "To begin with, the word is 'Hutcheon.' Aha, ye don't like it; and you've reason, I grant ye. All the better for this business, my son. Hutcheon has had a fortune left him by his brother, and you and me, my son, are going to have a hand in the spending of it. Twenty thousand pounds! A nice round sum to put to sea with, isn't it?"

"Twenty thousand!" exclaimed Tam, while he stopped and blinked and winked in amazement. "No! Ye dinna say that!"

"Every figure of it; two and four noughts."

"Crikey!" cried Tam in the extremity of wonder; for he cherished the hope some day of having a hundred pounds a year as a well-rounded comfortable income, just as pushing young men in these days and farther south think of a thousand. "But in whatna way can we meddle wi't?" he asked with avid attention.

Then in short, clear, business-like sentences O'Rhea told Tam of the Master's desire to carry the folk to Andaman, and of his own intention to work that desire to his own pleasure and profit and to the profit and delight of the adventurous young man whom he was then taking into his confidence.

How would he manage that? asked Tam.

"How will we manage that? I'm going to work heart and soul for this Andaman idea; I'm going to become Hutcheon's devoted right-hand man, and you're going to be mine; I'm going to get the working of all the ropes, and when we've sailed away over the high seas we're going to say 'Good-bye' to Hutcheon and his old folk. Ye understand what I mean?"

"Fine that," answered Tam.

"Well, and then we're going to sail away to the South Seas to attend to our own business, d'ye see? and to enjoy ourselves as only bold adventurers can."

"Ye mean ye'd mutiny," said Tam, with a tight mouth and a timid shake of the head.

"Mutiny? Not a bit of it. That'll be all right; trust me. We can't say any more about it now, because there isn't time, d'ye see? But we'll sail away for a life on the ocean wave; we'll have the plunder, and we'll find the girls——" Tam uttered a shy, hysterical laugh. "We'll splice the main-brace for a spell, and give everybody a free gangway, and then away we'll stand under every stitch to fish for moidores and doubloons and pieces of eight."

Tam was more than satisfied; he seemed elated. Then O'Rhea made his critical revelation and request. He told him of the letter to the Queen (he did not say that he had prompted it) and of the absolute necessity of intercepting it. Was it not evident that if the letter were permitted to go to the Queen, Hutcheon would never set out for Andaman? and would not Tam, therefore, contrive to get the letter into his possession? At that suggestion Tam shied with the greatest timidity. It would be robbery! It would be a dreadful offence to commit! He would lose his place! He would be tried in Court! He would be put in prison—if he did that and were found out!

"But ye won't be found out," said O'Rhea. "Why should ye, a clever lad like you? Look ye here!" and he clutched Tam by the arm and set forth to him how easily the thing could be done; but Tam trembled and shivered and shook his head, till O'Rhea was beside himself. "Well, my son," said he, stopping in a breathless sadness and wiping his forehead, "I did think we'd pull this off together. The game won't come off at all if ye let that letter go; that's plain. You and me'll go on as we are to the end of our days; you know what the poet says, 'There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted,'—there you are just as you were! I did think we two, you and me, were meant to understand one another; but no, we're only 'doomed for awhile to walk this earth,' and squeeze the orange dry. All right. We ought to find little gold pieces like that"—he took from his waistcoat pocket and exhibited a five-franc gold piece—"as plentiful as shells on the shore; but we won't. Take it and keep it in memory of our talk. I've no use for it."

"Weel, weel," said Tam, screwing his courage to the sticking place, and greedily looking at and fingering the little coin, "look here, I'll try."

"Try!" exclaimed O'Rhea, as if in a fury of desperation. "Try! '*Try*' be damned! What d'ye mean by '*try*'? I want somebody not to *try* to do a thing, but to promise me to *do* it!"

"Weel," said Tam, stiff with resolution, "I'll do't."

"That's right," said O'Rhea. "And ye've only decided in time, for your quarter of an hour's up. Bring the letter to my shanty to-night, and we'll read it, and see what more's to be done."

And Tam went his way, insidiously bought with a five-franc piece, which to his ignorantly piratical mind was tinged with the romance of doubloons and pieces of eight. He performed his pact as we have seen, finding, as the untried soldier finds, his terror and trembling disappear in the encounter which he dreaded.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### "ON HER MAJESTY'S SERVICE."

HUTCHEON waited with the seemliest patience for the Royal answer to his letter; but his show of patience might have been less had it not been for the impatience of Hamish, who could not refrain from exclaiming, "D'ye think it'll come the day? Oh, I wish it would come! Oh, I hope she winna forget!" and running out at ill-judged intervals to look for the postman. Hutcheon had, however, to find an outlet for his restlessness of body, and to that end he set to and dug over the kail and potato patches of such of the weavers as had been too much occupied with their looms to have had time to handle a spade. Then there came something to divert his thoughts altogether. The soft-footed

Jaques brought a note which caused the Master emotion and amazement. It was addressed on the outside to "The Master of Hutcheon," and written within on smooth, thick paper in a lady's angular hand. It was signed "Aimée Lepine," and that was enough to send a gush of blood to his heart and thence to his head. But it was the matter of the note that amazed him. It requested the honour of his company to dinner at seven o'clock the following evening, and the favour of an answer by the hand of Jaques! Hutcheon had never in his life dined out, and how was he to do it now? He exchanged some very polite words with Jaques on the subject.

"I am not used to company," said the Master.

"Ah, *mais oui*," said Jaques, "*M'sieu le Maître* have choose to be original, eccentric; it is, without doubt, very amusing, very nice, but—*mais*——"

"And I aye take my dinner early in the afternoon," said the Master, "on the chap o' two; I doubt it'll stick me to take another dinner at seven o'clock at night."

"Call it supper, *M'sieu le Maître*," said Jaques, with the shadow of a smile. "It is equal; it is the name, is it not?"

"I doubt the name wouldna deceive the stomach, for all the supper it knows is a bit bannock and butter, and that a long while after seven o'clock. I daresay Miss Aimée and the Bailie wouldna like me to say I could not go?"

"Oh, *M'sieu le Maître*, they would be desolate, *M'sieu le Bailli* and Mademoiselle Aimée. The dinner is in honour of *M'sieu le Maître*, if *M'sieu le Maître* will permit that I say it. But *M'sieu le Bailli* will make the hour of dinner the hour what pleases *M'sieu le Maître*, for *M'sieu le Bailli* know what honour it is due to *M'sieu le Maître*."

"I wouldna think of such a thing!" exclaimed the Master. "To put anybody by their meal-time just to please myself! No, no. Let it be seven o'clock, and I'll make the less of my own dinner to do honour to the Bailie's," said he, with a smile.

So he wrote a note in reply, and, without his designing that it should be so, it had a tone of condescension which did him no harm with the Bailie.

"Madam," he wrote, "I will pleasure myself by taking dinner with you and the Bailie, according to the terms of your invitation."

It was only when Jaques was gone that the Master reflected he had engaged to sit down to food with a man whom a week or two ago he had regarded as the enemy of all his interests. He still, he believed, considered the Bailie an enemy, and he told himself that he had engaged to sit at meat with him only to please Miss Aimée.

His next concern was to make a proper appearance at the dinner given in his honour; for he felt rightly that a gentleman owes that as much to himself as to his host and hostess. He was troubled to decide what he should wear. He was commonly fastidious only about his linen (he had one or two very elegant shirts with frilled cambric fronts), his outer clothing being hodden grey or coarse blue both Saturday and Sunday. Neither grey nor blue would fulfil the sudden demand made on his appearance, and he had no knowledge, or at least no recognition, of the possibility of making up deficiencies of dress without delay by "ready-made" garments from some tailor in the town. What, then, was he to do? He went then to his bedroom, and opened an old leather trunk, in which reposed several suits of clothing that had belonged to his father and grandfather. He took them out and tried the coats one after another, but though they all fitted him none became him. His unshaven face, as he declared to himself, was ill to match. Then he came upon a complete Highland outfit of the Gordon colours which he had almost forgotten. It was somewhat soiled, and he was pleased to fancy (though he was probably wrong) that in that dress his grandfather had fought at Culloden. He arrayed himself in it, and found it became both his person and his beard. But yet he would not wear it, for, like David in Saul's armour, he had not proved it. He had never worn the Highland dress, he did not feel at all warlike, and he had no desire to appear so unlike himself. He finally let his choice settle on a suit of his grandfather's which was something after the style of a court suit of to-day. It consisted of a coat of black silk, the



skirt of which was cut somewhat away, a waistcoat, knee breeches and stockings of the same material, and silver-buckled shoes with square toes.

Fortunately it was dark when he set out arrayed for the dinner at the Bailie's, or the inhabitants of the houses in the loan would have expressed amazement to see him in such a guise. There was no amazement on his appearance at Corbie Ha'; attentive and critical eyes were cast upon his person, but the Bailie and his family, besides that they were too polite, were also too convinced of the Master's eccentricity to express surprise. Soon they became used to his appearance, and accepted it as very proper and becoming for a gentleman of position and lineage. Aimée was especially of that opinion, and indirectly she expressed it. She addressed her father, but she turned a referring eye on the Master.

"I think, father," said she, "most men must be stupid—very. Why do they put on, without saying a word of objection, the things the tailor gives them? It is evident that gentlemen—true gentlemen—did at one time think of their dress as ladies do—why should they not?—and wear things that were beautiful. How long is it, father, since men began to wear ugly tubes of cloth on their legs?"

The Bailie did not remember, did not think it worth while to try to remember. He only knew that he had always been glad to be comfortable and warm, without fash-ing himself whether what he wore was beautiful; and, *mon Dieu!* when he was a young man it was barely possible for him to get clothes at all. Then the Master, interested, inquired concerning that time, and the Bailie rummaged in the background of his memory for stories of the great Napoleon and the Revolution; whereupon the Master remembered and related how fond the Chartists were of the air of the Marseillaise, and how his brother had played it on the flute. And then the Master almost attained a quarrel with the Bailie. With a polite preface of "excuse me," the latter ventured to express his wonder that young men like the Master and his brother, men of family, sons

of the noblesse, aristocrats, should have meddled with, had a hand in, so low and mean a movement as Chartism.

"There were a good many aristocrats, sons of the noblesse," said George, who had read Carlyle, "took the people's side in your Revolution, father."

"Speaking for myself," said the Master, "I think I was a Chartist more because our folk needed some help than because I kenned or cared anything about Chartism."

"You mean, *m'sieu*," said the Bailie, "the weavers of Ilkastane? You will permit, *M'sieu le Maître*, that I again wonder that you fash yourself so much about the weavers. They are *canaille*; they are low people; they are no good."

These were the words that provoked the Master, so that he had to look round to remark the presence of Aimée, and to remember he sat as a guest before he was able to speak calmly. He repeated to the Bailie what he had already told him—that he was especially bound to see that these folk of Ilkastane were not oppressed, because of the ancient connection between their fathers and his own; but, more than that, he declared that he could not agree to call any poor, struggling, starving work-folk "low people."

"It's not just fair, Bailie," said he. "With your trocking and trading, your mills and your steam-engines, ye take from them their means of living, and syne ye blame them for not being so nice and canny as ye'd like; ye make slaves of them, and ye're surprised they're not freemen; ye ding them over, and syne miscall them for not standing up."

"I know, *M'sieu le Maître*," said the Bailie, "that you think all business, commerce, affairs, is bad, wicked, and you have wished to hang to the gibbet the men who have the business or the manufacture," added he with a conscious smile.

"I'd hang them," the Master astonished the Bailie by asseverating, "as high as Haman, wherever I found them weighing down to the earth the folk that work for them and

squeezing the life out of them. But ye mistake me, Bailie, if ye think I'd have no business done at all. I'd have it done justly and fairly, though ;" and the Master went on to give his opinion that business and manufacture, as they were being conducted, would end by ruining both the people and themselves ; to which the Bailie replied with a shrug that he did not trouble to look so forward ; he applied himself to his business and left the future alone. Him, he was not a politician.

"But," he ended by declaring, "in this world one must eat or be eaten. *A bon chat bon rat*. Me, I prefer not to be eaten. *A bon chat bon rat*. *Voilà tout*."

It was not till they were in the drawing-room—the room in which the Master had already sat and talked with Aimée and examined the atlas and discovered "British Possessions coloured red," that Aimée and the Master had sufficient opportunity to consider or to talk to each other. Aimée first sat down to the piano to play at her father's request.

"Amuse *M'sieu le Maître, ma chère*," said the Bailie in his native speech. "Play to him some morsels of his songs of Burns."

"*Oui, mon papa*," answered Aimée, and forthwith sang and played most tenderly the Jacobite song, "Wae's me for Prince Charlie !"

The Master stood near and listened entranced, with a thrill through all his marrow and a thumping of the heart. Never before had he heard such singing and such playing. He glanced round to see if the others were equally affected, and was amazed to note that the music seemed to be a signal for the Bailie to lean back in his easy chair and go to sleep, and for George to draw closer to Elsie M'Cree over some engravings. (Elsie had also sat by George at dinner, somewhat to the Master's surprise.) But the Master quickly forgave them their inattention, for he felt then that he had that bonnie bird, that sweet singer, all to himself. He could listen to her wonderful voice, and take delight in every turn and poise of her pretty head and arms without thinking of these others at all. When the plaintive Jacobite air was finished she dashed into a martial measure



know my own poor folk fine, for I have lived all my life among them."

"Well," said Aimée, doubtfully, "they frightened me."

"They did?" exclaimed the Master. "When that?"

"I must tell you," said she. "After you told me about your people and that you would take them away, perhaps to the islands of Andaman, I went into the loan; I was curious. I wished to see your people. And they made me afraid."

"You were disappointed," said he, with a rare indulgent smile. "Yes, they're not very civil to strangers; they're unco jealous of strangers coming to look at them."

"Oh, yes," said Aimée sharply, as if she were touched to the quick by the memory of her grievance, "they were rude. They came to the doors with children; the women regarded me much in the dress, and the men regarded me in the face. They spoke not a word except among them. They said, 'It will be the Bailie Lepine's daughter; what will she be seeking here? She's a gey small creature.' Am I so very little, do you think?"

And what could the Master say then but that she was not very little, that she was just a "nice size?" Yet he said more than that.

"And if ye are smaller than most Scots lasses, what does that matter?" said he eloquently and boldly, and with a light in his eyes which made Aimée look down. "Is not the mavis smaller than the corbie? and is not a golden sovereign smaller than a copper penny? The folk mean no harm though; they're a bit dour, but you and they would be fine friends if ye knew one another better. Oh, yes, ye'd like them fine if ye knew them and knew what they had been. There's Loudon, now; to see him—a poor, quiet, frightened auld man, thumping his lay and shaking his head and saying nothing—ye'd never think he'd been a sergeant in the gallant Forty-twa; and there's M'Kay, wheezing like a broken bellows, ye'd never think he'd been a drummer at the battle o' Waterloo; and Hay, Black Donald, Donuil Dhu—a man that's aye dying and that never dies—who could guess that afore the last Chartist year, when

all the folk were starving and were fain to feed on nettle-broth, he was the strongest man in all the country-side—the grandest at putting the stone and tossing the caber! And there's Geordie Steven, with but one e'e; he lost the other in the Afghan war. I think ye'd like him; oh, yes, I think ye'd like him fine; he has a good heart and a daft head, has Steven; oh, I think ye'd find Steven amusing. And the wives—well, they have a hard time o't. They are at the wheel morning and night; they're taken up with their men and their bairns; and what more can ye expect of them? They say little, and when they say anything their tongues are rough; but they're not bad women. There's auld Kirsty Kyle, now; she has a tongue like any file, but she has the best heart in the world. She's always helping her neighbours—and that's the Law and the Gospel, as folk say—and once she came and nursed me when I had to take to my bed."

"I should like to know her!" exclaimed Aimée, with a quick touch of sympathy.

"Will ye come and see her?" asked the Master readily. "Come, and I'll go with you among them I know best, and I'm sure they'd be glad to see ye, and ye'd like them fine."

"Oh, yes," said she, thinking of him as the Master clothed with authority over these people. "I should like to go among them with you."

Presently she asked him why all these people had different names, since they were the descendants of the followers and retainers of his forefathers; were they not all of one clan? And he answered that that was a difficult question, but he did not suppose that they had been originally of one clan; it was a very long time since the clans had lived distinctly separate, if they had ever really done so.

"And names," said he, "are kittle things. There's Hew Tamson, now—he is truly a Campbell, I believe—one o' the crafty, treacherous, red-headed Campbells—but some one or other o' his forbears has been called Tam, and his son would be called Tamson, and syne when they come to the Lowlands the 'Campbell' would be forgotten altogether.

And there's myself. My name is Hutcheon—Hutcheon of Hutcheon—but really and truly my forbears belonged to the clan Gordon."

"Oh!" exclaimed Aimée, "to the mad Gordons, like Lord Byron?"

"Ay," said he with a smile; "just that—to the mad Gordons."

Thus they talked; but it truly mattered little what they said, for each was involved in the snare of the other's attraction, and all subjects were alike of interest that gave them excuse for remaining near each other, seeing each other's glance and hearing each other's voice. And still the father slumbered on, and the brother was closely involved in his own snare, and these two—the Master and Aimée—were as if alone together, without the embarrassment of being truly alone. They were by themselves in a little world of light and joy, and each to the other was radiant with life and loveliness.

Presently, however, the Bailie woke up to say, "It is very nice, *ma chère*; it is very good song, and very pretty. Do *M'sieu le Maître* like it?"

And thus it came about, with that talk about the Master's folk, that next day he and the Bailie's daughter were together when a great event happened. The Master was leading Aimée round to make the acquaintance of Kirsty Kyle and others, and Hamish, beside himself with excitement, followed them about as a kind of incense-bearing acolyte. Hamish was so much taken up with the presence of the fairy Princess of Corbie Ha' that he completely forgot the occupation that had held him for several days. They were in the weaving-shop, all three, when the postman in his scarlet coat passed the window and hammered with the head of his staff on the outer door, according to his wont.

"James," he called in stentorian tones, "the Master of Hutcheon!"

"Oh, the letter, Hutcheon, the letter!" cried Hamish, dancing in his excitement.

The Master went out to the door.

"Are ye," asked the postman, "James, the Master of Hutcheon?"

"I am just that," answered the Master. "There's no wale o' Masters here."

"*On Her Majesty's Service*," said the postman, presenting a big blue envelope, and staring hard before he departed on his way.

"It hasna got a Queen's head," said Hamish, standing on tip-toe to see the face of the letter, "'cause it's frae the Queen! Oh, read it, Hutcheon, read it!"

Hutcheon looked at the boy as if he feared to open it. He turned to Miss Lepine, who had followed him out of the weaving-shop.

"I have a letter," said he, "I would like to read. Would ye mind, Miss Lepine, coming up the stairs and sitting down while I read it?"

So, in a second or two, Aimée, to her amazement, was seated in the Master's garret, gazing at his fireplace, gazing at his skylight, gazing at his carpenter's bench, wondering at the meanness of the place compared with the greatness of the Master, while he opened his letter and began to read half aloud, and Hamish stood by with ears, eyes, and mouth open to catch everything stirring.

"Gracious mercy!" exclaimed the Master. "What's this?"

It was not a letter; it was a great sheet of foolscap with a seal at the bottom, and with here and there on the page a word in strange, old-English letters.

"*Whereas*" [Hutcheon was sure that must be the opening word, in spite of its angular illegibility] "*our trusty liege, James, the Master of Hutcheon, has petitioned us on behalf of*" [there were some words the Master could not well make out in his eager and astonished first reading] . . . "*to our islands of Andaman. . . . We, Victoria, by the Grace of God, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, appoint and command our liege, the said James, the Master of Hutcheon, to proceed with . . . to the Great Andaman, and to have and to hold . . . with all the appurtenances and*



*perquisites thereof, under the ancient title and designation of . . . or King of Andaman."*

That was what the Master read skippingly, his tone becoming louder, faster, and more surprised as he proceeded.

"Most astonishing!" said he, when he had finished, and stood gazing from one to the other of his companions. "But what does it mean?"

"It means, *M'sieu le Maître*," said Aimée, rising in wonder, surely it means that the Queen has made you a King—the King of Andaman!"

"Oh," exclaimed Hamish, capering in delight. "The Queen has made the Maister a King!"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### VIEWS OF KINGSHIP.

"THIS," said the Master, "is the strangest and most astonishing thing I ever heard!"

"You did not expect it?" said Aimée.

"Expect it? No!"

"Then, of course," said Aimée, "it surprises you, *M'sieu le Maître*. But," she continued persuasively, "it is not truly surprising that the Queen should ask you to go to be King of Andaman. You are here Master of Hutcheon, and if you please, can it be more to be king of a savage isle than to be Master here? I think truly it cannot be much more. It is not a very great honour that the Queen has added to you, *M'sieu le Maître*!"

"Oh, it's a great honour for sure," said he. "And I'm thinking it has come about like this: The Queen wants me to be in complete authority there when I take the folk out, and not to have any governor or lord over me. Oh, yes, I think it's very kind of her."

"And you will go?" asked Aimée, wistfully.

"To be sure, Miss Lepine," he exclaimed. "I must go when I get orders like that. Forbye that I have already asked if I might take the folk there."

"It is very bad!" she burst forth, turning her head away. "I am desolate! I only begin to make acquaintance with you, and you will go away—far away!—and you will come back never! Why did I make acquaintance if it will finish in this manner? This is a place horrible! It has no nice people! Why is it so difficult to have people and things as one loves them to be?"

What was it she said? The Master grew red as the possible meaning of her words flashed on him, and his brain and heart were caught in a whirl which mingled her warm words with those of the astonishing letter. Was she saying that she was glad she knew him, and that she would be sorry if he went away and she saw him no more? Was she—the winsome bird!—frankly and simply letting him know that she liked him? And what if he said to her that their acquaintance need not end? What if he should ask her to go away with him to that land of promise? What if he should put forth his hand to her—gently and softly so as not to alarm her—and take her as she stood there, and say, "Come with me, and let us go away and be king and queen together?" What if she might be prevailed on to go and be always with him,—his sweet singer, his humming-bird of beauty? Then—the hope was too delirious!—then Heaven could give no greater happiness, no fuller fulfilment of all he had planned for and dreamt of, than that he should sail away in the company of this sweet little lady at the head of his folk to the Promised Land, the Islands of the Blest!

With such whirling fancies and queries as these his heart thumped and his head span. The impulse was strong upon him to appeal to her at once, but the boy was there, looking eagerly on, and—and Aimée turned and spoke in a changed voice, and so the opportunity passed.

"Oh, but," said she, with a quick impulsiveness all her own, "I must go home." She glanced at him, and some-

thing of the truth could not fail to flash on her. She stood silent, with her beautiful brown eyes cast down to where her fingers were feeling for the fastening of her mantle. She seemed held by the fascination of his look and expression from stirring a step or uttering another word. And the Master himself said nothing for a moment; half-sitting on the table, he gripped its edge hard with his fingers.

"What for need ye hurry away?" he said at length in a low, tremulous voice.

She turned her head, gracefully and mischievously as a bird might, and said:

"It is time for me to go home; do you not think it is?" and she glanced the while at the royal letter which lay on the table; and he recognised his opportunity of detaining her awhile.

"I'm thinking," said he, "that maybe you can help me to make all these words out."

He turned and read the letter aloud with her, slowly, lingeringly, perilously conscious that he was very near her, that by the slightest movement of finger or elbow he might touch her. And Hamish went and leaned on the other side of the table and wondered at their behaviour. Why did they skip from one word to another a line off? Why did they not read right on and discover in a business-like way what were the doubtful words? But the important significance of one phrase suddenly seized the Master's attention and brought it back from the young lady's fascinating presence to Her Majesty's commands. He repeated it aloud to himself.

"*Proceed with all secrecy and dispatch.*" Secrecy and dispatch!" he exclaimed, standing erect. "That means, to be sure, I must get ready and get off as soon as ever I can." Aimée glanced at him with a bright, bird-like quickness, as if she would say, "And will you go, then, after all?" "And," he continued, missing her look, "the thing must not be spoken of. You hear that, you nickem," said he to Hamish. "The Queen forbids ye to say anything to anybody either about king or kingdom, or about our getting ready to go away."

"And me, I hear it also, *M'sieu le Maître*," said Aimée, smiling and curtseying; "it is for me also—that secrecy. I ought not to have seen the letter, for I am a gossip; but I will not speak of it to anyone, because I fear that you, the King, might cut my head off."

"You're merry," said the Master with a smile of satisfied indulgence, "but, to be sure, we'll none o' us speak of it, for there's the Queen's command as plain as need be. But it is nonsense, Miss Lepine, to say you should not have seen the letter, for I'd have been certain to tell you of it, and I'm thinking ye'll be interested in't just as ye were interested when I was so lucky as to get you to point out to me 'British Possessions coloured Red.'"

"Well," said she with an arch demureness, "if you do not mind that I know——"

"Mind that ye know? I'm glad—I'm overjoyed that ye know! Why do ye say such things?" and he cast on her a look of some reproach.

"But I must now say good-bye," said she, and held out her hand and smiled with a bewitchingness which suggested that though she went she was very loth to go.

"And must you go now, then?" said he. He added suddenly, turning and looking on her, "Can I come and see you and speak to you to-night? Will ye be in if I come?"

"Oh, yes," she answered innocently, as if she did not guess what he might mean, "we shall be at home. It will please father very much to see you."

"But will I see *you*?" he asked. "Because I would like to have a talk with ye about this letter."

"Oh, but the business of the letter is secret," said she, glancing with arched eyebrows. "You should not talk of that. But I will be at home."

When she had gone he was in a half-dazed, wholly ecstatic condition. It is doubtful which held the more important position in his mind and which shone the brighter—whether the astounding Royal answer to his humble letter, or his delightful hope that the shining fairy lady had a liking for him—a liking which might come to be one with

the feeling which intoxicated himself. Because it has not been necessary in this partial history to say that the Master had never been in love before, it must not be supposed that he had had no experience of women. To suppose that would be to estimate him not human, and especially not a countryman of him who wrote "Green grow the rashies, O!" But this that had hold of him now was an altogether new and all-absorbing feeling. He was so possessed that, as was his wont at times of agitation and excitement, he went to his bench and began to occupy his hands while his mind was free. The astonished and scandalised Hamish recalled him to himself.

"Kings," said the boy, "dinna work at things—do they?"

He set his tools down and turned.

"I think I've heard, laddie, o' a French King that worked at making locks; but then, I believe he did it only for a ploy, and he lost his kingdom, if I'm not mista'en. So I think that maybe a King had better work at no trade but his own. The Master o' Hutcheon might handle chisel and plane, but the King o' Andaman mustna. 'Od, I was inclined to forget that the Queen has delegated a kind o' royal authority to me! It's most extraordinar'!" and he returned to the table to consider the letter, and to try to apprehend duly what he now was and what was his duty.

"*With secrecy and dispatch!*" That phrase stuck to and worried him. Of course, in order to get away he must make preparations, the practical details of which could only be settled with some other persons; therefore absolute secrecy was impossible, and therefore absolute secrecy could not be meant. So he would take counsel—and with whom, in the first instance at least, save with him who knew all about these foreign regions to which the royal command now ordered him to proceed—the comrade who had had so much experience of all the ways of life?

On the spur of the thought he set out to O'Rhea's shanty.

"Are ye in, Fergus?" the Master asked, opening the door after knocking and waiting through a long pause of silence.

"Oh, come in, Hutcheon, come in."

The Master saw O'Rhea through a haze of tobacco and peat-smoke, saw him sitting at the table, half-naked it seemed; in truth, a breath of June weather had come forward into the middle of April, and O'Rhea had cast off his ague and his clothes, and sat rejoicing in shirt and trousers, with his muscular hairy arms bare. He rose and opened the window to clear the room of its obscuring smoke, and he tied a red handkerchief about his head that he might not catch cold. At that the Master exclaimed:

"Weel, Fergus! Ye want but your beard back to look like that Will Atkins in the picture in Hamish's book! Ye look as like a bloodthirsty pirate as man ever looked."

That chance shot threw O'Rhea off his equipoise of self-conscious anxiety and happy audacity. He was wondering how Hutcheon was taking the sham royal letter, when Hutcheon opened his mouth and spoke, to compare him to a pirate. It was a singular coincidence. But he boldly faced it down.

"There's comfort in that, Hutcheon," said he, "for I've always found that the man that looks worse than he is is a long sight more to be trusted than the man that looks better than he possibly can be. But what favourable breeze has wafted you here, *M'sieu le Maître?*" he asked with a smile; and his smile could be very engaging.

"Breeze?" retorted the Master. "A royal whirlwind. Read that," and he handed the letter in the big blue envelope.

"*'On Her Majesty's Service!'*" read Fergus. "Eh? What's that?"

"Open it and read," said the Master.

Fergus opened it out and read (it was all very well played; he was an excellent actor)—read slowly and carefully, as if feeling the way for his astonished understanding to follow, and then in a little while more and more rapidly and eagerly, as if an amazed apprehension were urging on his tongue, till the climax of speed and pitch was reached in "*Rajah or King of Andaman.*"

"Why," he exclaimed, as in the height of friendly glee, "that'll just suit you, won't it? That's the very thing for

you. I congratulate you, Hutcheon, my boy, with all my heart."

"But," said Hutcheon, "it's most extraordinar'. I expected nothing o' the kind."

"Why not, my boy, why not?" O'Rhea was afraid then lest the Master would say he could not accept so high and burdensome an appointment, and in his desire to make the kingly state seem of sufficiently small account he almost overdid it. "Was not Saul, if I remember right, taken from minding his father's donkeys? and David from herding sheep, and made a king? and why should not you, the Master of Hutcheon, be taken from twisting weavers' webs and made King of Andaman, which, after all, is not Great Britain and Ireland?"

"I have never made a trade o' twisting webs, Fergus," said the Master in some offence. "But after all," he continued, with the mock humility of pride, "if the Queen has thought right to appoint an unworthy liege like myself to take her place in Andaman, who am I or my father's house to raise objections? And, to come to the hinder end o't, if the Gordons cannot show a king in the past they have been gey sib wi' kings."

And so both the Master and O'Rhea were satisfied. The Master, if he had the smallest doubt before that there was something unreal and evanescent about his appointment, had no uncertainty about it now that O'Rhea, of all men, had accepted it without query or demur; and O'Rhea was solidly convinced that the Master had swallowed his bait, and that he held him secure.

"Well, then, Fergus," said the Master, "I'm thinking I'll have to be asking ye for advice."

"It's at your service, Hutcheon—at your service my boy. '*Secrecy and dispatch*,' these have to be your watchwords, I believe;" and he took up the royal letter to make sure he had not misquoted.

"Just that," answered the Master.

"Well," said O'Rhea, spreading his arms out on the table, clasping his hands and putting his considering thumb between his teeth, "we must think of the practical business of

'*dispatch.*' Smart's the word!" As if he had not already settled in his own mind all the practical business! "First we must find a ship—a good ship; a top-sail schooner's the thing!"

"Ca' canny, Fergus man!" said the Master. "Before we get as far as that, I think we should call a consultation of our old friends."

"A consultation of old friends!"

"Surely. It would hardly be fair to leave them out."

"M'Cree and the rest, you mean?"

"To be sure. And I should have my subordinates and officers appointed, all in their proper places, should I no?"

"Officers and subordinates! O Lord!"

"Do ye no think it necessary?"

"Necessary, yes; but—but it will delay things very much, Hutcheon."

"That canna be helped. We must proceed properly and in order."

"True for you, Hutcheon," said Fergus, "true."

But his brow was clouded; he saw that the Master was going to take his kingship seriously; and that to play the master and manage him would cost more pains than he had anticipated.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### "THE WOOING O'T."

THERE never yet was a woman, however inexperienced, who did not know when a man was taken with her. That is doubtless owing mainly to the simplicity and obviousness with which a man shows his preference, but it is also due partly to the extreme sensitiveness of feeling and apprehension which nature has developed in women, so that they may shun the overtures of the destroyer and avoid the very beginnings of evil. Miss Lepine was as well equipped



in that regard as any of her sex, and the Master had shown from the first ("who ever loved that loved not at first sight?") that he was taken with her, and shown it very plainly. And since he was not at all in her view a man to be dodged and shunned, nor she in truth very much a woman to dodge and shun, it followed that she considered her case in all seriousness.

The Master of Hutcheon was all she had ever dreamt of him who should appear and take possession of her. He was manly and handsome; he was romantic and picturesque; he was of ancient race and had tolerable wealth, and he was not as other men who are content to eat and drink, to wear clothes and spend time over something they call business. He had heroic schemes, and he was a leader and saviour of men and women. She had that day seen the narrow and bare condition in which he lived; if she had believed him to be really poor that would have probably hurt and repelled her, but she knew he was not poor, and she therefore saw his voluntary poverty as the condescension and sacrifice of a divine being who takes the troubles of the poor upon himself. And therefore it was that she believed without suspicion or scruple in his royal appointment.

If parents and guardians should wonder that Aimée so readily became interested in so strange a person as the Master, let them bethink them what her upbringing had been—now in a convent in France and then in a school in Edinburgh. Let them remember that, being the daughter of her father—a Frenchman and a Roman Catholic—she was cut off from association with people of her father's class and rank in Inverdoon, who were without exception Presbyterians; and let them consider that, if possession is nine points of the law, opportunity is nine points of possession.

Aimée, then, was possessed heart and mind by the Master, or rather by her ideal image, or *simulacrum*, of the Master; for if men in Religion have always made their gods anthropomorphic, the balance is adjusted by women in Love having always made their men theomorphic. I suppose there hardly ever was a human male—not even the

commonest walking, eating, grumbling, snoring masculine monster—whom some dear woman's heart did not make a god of. Aimée was compact of warm impulses and tender dreams, and the Master—or her image of him—was the sun to make them grow and bloom. She was the earth and he was her great luminary. Before he appeared above her horizon there were many bright planets and stars revolving distantly in the sky—a tolerably dark and cold sky; but when he appeared he caused all stars and planets to disappear and filled her universe with light and heat. When first she met the Master she had been rather afraid of him, afraid of his seriousness, afraid of what she heard of his nobility, afraid of the dreadful and eccentric things she had been told he had done and said; but when she had talked with him, when she had found *Andaman* for him in the atlas, and when she had sung to him, she thought she completely understood him. His eccentricities fell lightly into their places as ornamental characteristic parts of his array, just as her own frills and laces became pretty parts of herself under the light touch of her own fair fingers. And this man, this hero, this demi-god was taken with her! loved her truly, perhaps (and her cheek blushed and her heart beat at the thought); this ruler and saviour of men was interested in her and desired to have her interest in his noble schemes. And he wished to talk to her that night! What—what did he wish to say? For it would have been plain to the meanest female comprehension that the purpose he assigned of talking over the Queen's letter was not the true one.

It was after dinner. Aimée had, as usual, played her father to sleep; her brother George and putative companion Elsie were, as usual, also set down together; and so she turned from the piano to gaze through the unblinded window of the drawing-room into the soft night. The drawing-room was on the ground floor, and the French windows were open, because the heat of June had made an advanced inroad upon April; so Aimée stepped out from the carpeted floor to the gravelled pathway. An almost new moon was in the sky, gleaming like mother of pearl and making all

the garden look fantastic and mysterious in its white light. It was to pay her *devoirs* to the new moon that she had come out, Aimée told herself, and she paid them, bowing seven times and turning her little purse over in her pocket; but at the same time she had a ready ear for a footstep that presently sounded on the gravelled way that conducted from the great gate.

"It is he!" she said to herself. "At last he comes!"

She tripped swiftly forward towards the approaching sound, and stopped when out of the light and purview of the drawing-room window and near a clump of lilacs, the blooms of which had already begun to open and exhale their delicious scent. She stood and saw him come, and wondered what he would say to find her there against the sweet-smelling shrubs. She saw him come, looking tall and handsome in the moonlight in his quaint Scottish attire.

"Do not," said Aimée to herself, "his simple clothes become him? But who would guess he is a king? And yet he is every inch a king!" she said, ignorantly quoting a notable phrase from a famous tragedy.

When he came near he stepped forward. Seeing her in her evening array, and all subdued and enwrapped by the moonlight, he stopped and stared with a wrinkled brow.

"My certie!" he exclaimed, "but it's you!"

The intimate compliment of the "you" had its effect upon Aimée.

She laughed a laugh that seemed in its silveriness and its ripple akin to the moonlight.

"And what, *M'sieu le Maître*," said she with a little sweep of curtesy, "did you think it might be?"

He looked at her. Had she come out to meet him, and had she been waiting for him there? His heart went out to her with all the impulsiveness and fancy of his perfervid race.

"And might I not think," said he, smiling, "that ye would be one of the fairy-folk come back that they say have been driven ayont the seas by the wickedness and want o' faith of men and women, and the building of mills and suchlike?"

But," he added, crossing his hands resolutely before him, as if he had much ado to refrain from embracing her and gathering her to his breast, "will ye not be cold like that? No that the night is cold, but the moonlight, they say, is no just canny—it shimmers and shivers upon ye—and ye should be happit and sained from its influence."

"Yes," she said with a pretty imitation of a shiver, "we must go in. When father wakes up he will think that I am lost."

"Will he be expecting me?" said the Master.

"I did not say to him that you come," she answered simply. "Had I wrong?"

"Wrong? And what for should it be wrong? It is not to see the Bailie that I'm here. And what for need ye go in? It is bonny here; there is the caller air and ye can smell at the flowers. Will ye not take a walk round the garden?" he asked, laying a light compelling touch on her arm. "And see, I have brought my plaid about me just out of habit, and ye will hap that round ye," said he, putting it at once about her shoulders, "and ye'll catch no harm from the night air or the moonbeams."

Aimée submitted to be thus wrapped. She had a delicious sense of being taken possession of and of being cared for, and a thrill of pleasure when his hand smoothed the plaid on her shoulder.

"And now," said he softly, "we'll just take a walk round the garden, will we no? and I'll hold ye by the hand as ye held Hamish that Sabbath I saw ye first." She gave him her hand. She could not help it. She had to obey him. "And do you know what I thought," he continued while they wandered away into the moonlight garden, between rose bushes and raspberry canes, for there was an agreeable and economical alternation of the beautiful and useful in that ancient demesne, "do you know what I thought that Sabbath afternoon I first set eyes on ye? I thought to myself, 'That is the bonniest little bird in the whole world!' And when I heard ye speak, your voice gaed through me, and I said to myself, 'She is the most winsome wee thing man ever knew!'"

"Am I truly so very wee—so very little, then?" she asked in a soft, low voice.

"No, no," he protested. "Ye are just a nice befitting size; ye're just as high as a man's heart."

"It must be a big man," she declared.

"And it is," he answered readily. "It is."

He stopped an instant and drew her to him to demonstrate the truth of his statement. Their eyes shone to each other in the moonlight, and then they went on again closer together. A mutual thrill of feeling ran through them.

"Will ye go?" he asked suddenly, pressing her hand in his. "Will ye go over the sea, where the other fairies have gone? Will ye come with me to Andaman?"

"Oh, I do not know!" she answered in some alarm. She tried a little to withdraw her hand, but she failed and let it stay. "I should be away from everybody! There would be nobody but you!"

"And I should have nobody but you!" said he. "Nobody near me, I mean; I should want nobody."

"Oh, but, *m'sieu*," she said hurriedly, "you have your own people—the folk you love and live for and work for!"

"Not near me," said he, "not close to me; not dwelling right inside my heart. I have but room for one o' that kind."

"But," she exclaimed, "what will my father say, what will my father do, if I go so far?"

"What is it your father can say or do? I have seen from the first time I set eyes on ye that we were for one another. We two together, and all the rest of near and dear outside. So if we agree about that it can matter but little what the Bailie may say. Ye mind it is said that a man must leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and the wife must surely do the like. The Lord says that, my dawtie."

"What Lord, *M'sieu le Maître*?"

"The Lord Himsel'," answered the Master—"the Lord God. And the meaning is, that if a man lo'es a lassie to make her his wife, then he takes her to him and has her by him through thick and thin, storm and shine, and she holds to him, and his people become her people and his affairs her

affairs, and they two are kith and kin, all the world one to the other."

"And do you truly wish me so?" she asked, looking up with a radiant frankness.

"Wish ye so? Ay, that and more. I wish ye to be my own kind dearie, my mistress and my queen. Oh, yes; and in a wee while ye'll be as set on helping my poor folk as I am myself, and ye'll be as eager to get them out of all this clash and clamjamfrie we warstle in the thick o', and away to where we can all ha'e plenty of room, and plenty of food, and plenty of caller air and sun. Oh, yes. And we'll sail away in a fine ship of our own, with me and you at the helm, and all the salt seas shall be sunny, and summery, and dimpled, and dancing for you to sail over them. And in the ship there'll be a bonny cabin fitted up just as ye'd like it. And so we'll come to the bonny land that the Queen herself has turned over to me for the benefit of my folk; and there we shall dwell, guiding, and helping, and ruling the folk, me and you—ay, me and you together till the end, thanking God for all his wonderful ways and his wonderful goodness, for the sun, and the sea, and the caller air, and for sweet flowers and delicious fruit, and for contented, happy folk all around us! Ay, me and you hand in hand, my dawtie!—like Adam and Eve, my dear, in a new Paradise!—thanking the Lord morn and even, and the livelong day!"

The Master had much of the Celt in him—the Celt who is serious and dithyrambic about all his feelings, and who cultivates love as a religious emotion. And he was Celtic, too, in that, while he was strong with passion to the most tense, trembling point, passion had no violent, fiery outburst, but was melted into a sweet, enveloping tenderness.

"It is beautiful, *mon ami!*" murmured Aimée. "And how good you are!—and how kind to everyone!"

She pressed his arm in a thrill of gratification and vague gratitude.

"But I wish," said he—"wish more than anything else—to be kind to you, my dawtie—kind for ever and aye!"

Aimée said nothing, but pressed still closer to him. And

as they walked on thus she hardly knew what things he said or what she replied. They only came to her mind later when she was calm, as photographic pictures develop only when taken away from the light; she was conscious only then of contact with the Master and of being possessed by him, by his spirit and his ardour, and she saw in her fancy their triumphant pair of figures, as he pictured them, pacing strange, lovely shores, and sitting on chairs of state, ruling a happy people, and dispensing favour and justice.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE KING'S FIRST COUNCIL.

FROM that moonlit evening in the old garden of Corbie Ha' dated a noteworthy change in the Master. The conditions of his life had changed, and he changed with them. Fortune had singled him out to bestow favours on him—notable and unexpected favours, the last and the greatest of which was the love of the pearl of womankind, the most gracious creature that ever man knew. He had lived so long in the shade of life that he had become unaware of it, but when the sunshine burst upon him he was profoundly conscious of the change, and his nature expanded and flowered. He began to think more highly of himself than he had been wont; for it is inevitable that when Fortune deals kindly with a man he should come to believe that he has in some way shown himself worthy of her kindness. The Master was endued with the strengthening belief, except in regard to one thing, the gift of love, and that seemed to him so free and spontaneous, so much less proceeding from Fortune than from the sweet and gracious Aimée herself, that he could not cease to wonder at it and be humbly grateful at the same time as he drew it close about him with pride and joy, as if it were a rich and warm cloak.

There are some men who are spoiled by success in life and in love. In adverse or narrow circumstances they may have shown themselves cheerful, brave, and kindly, prompt to help and to console; with success they become gross and arrogant, greedy of flattery, and prone to jealousy, envy, and all uncharitableness. They are like pine-trees that flourish most in harsh and biting air. Others there are who need success to be seen at their best; they are like fruit trees that demand generous soil and sunshine to produce good fruit. The Master was of these last. He had not hitherto been lacking in the virtues of manhood, except that he had been somewhat wanting in cheerfulness and sociability, and that he had often been peevish, irritable, and prejudiced; but now his qualities began to shine with a new brightness and to fill out with a fresh amplitude. He was less severe and slow than he had been, even in speech, and was more suave and serene; he had always been dignified, but now he wore his dignity with a gayer, easier, and more impulsive air; and all with a supreme unconsciousness—inasmuch that he surprised his old friends, and even the jealous and watchful O'Rhea.

The change in him was first made publicly manifest on the evening on which he called about him the old friends of "The Cause," to set before them their new destiny. The company assembled in the long, low garret which was the Master's "houseplace" and workshop combined, and O'Rhea came also among them. It was but a small, queer remnant of the Great Rebellion of eight years before that sat around the Master's deal table, on which stood the grey-beard of whisky and dram-glasses to the full number of the company. Besides Hutcheon himself, there were Steven the one-eyed, with his well-trained oily ringlet in front of either ear, M'Kay the asthmatic, the father of the Crimean veteran, Hay the gaunt and hollow-eyed consumptive with his cavernous cough, and Willie Wilson, an obstinate creature with a persistent giggle, which falsely suggested that he found life full of amusement. M'Cree came late, and "bu-h-h'd" with amazement to see O'Rhea, who came after himself, pass to the head of the table and draw in a stool to



the Master's left hand. On the Master's right sat Hamish, to everybody's surprise ; but the Master offered no explanation or excuse for his presence, and no one dared to question him about it.

The Master stroked his pointed beard, swept his moustaches from his lips, and spoke.

"All that were asked to come," he said, "are now here, all except Loudon, and he was feared it meant mischief, and he wouldna come."

They looked round upon each other, to be assured who were there ; but the dusk was falling fast, and none could see another with distinctness ; the only things that stood out in evidence being the seven streaks of light which represented the dram-glasses for the company around the table.

"So," continued the Master, "we'll get to business."

"Bu-h-h !" cried M'Cree, rising in his place. "I rishe to order. We should first app'int a chairman ; and neist we should ha'e read the minutes o' the last meeting. Lat's do things in order."

Everybody laughed, for everybody understood what M'Cree was after. He demanded the minutes of the last meeting of the Chartist Executive, because of that meeting (as everyone remembered) he, the now neglected M'Cree, had been chairman.

"I think," said the Master quietly, "our old friend is mistaken. This meeting is the first of its kind ; it's a meeting by ordinar' ; it's a sort of Melchizedek among meetings ; there's been none like it afore, and there may be none like it after. It's not a Chartist meeting."

"No a Chartist meeting !" exclaimed M'Cree. "And what the wonder is it, sirs ?"

"By Jingo !" cried Steven, "I thoct it was to be drum and pike, and firelock, and begnet again. I thoct that was what for we cam' thegither !"

"Such a chield as ye are for fighting, Steven !" said the Master. "We want no pikes nor begnets the now. This is an affair o' peace and goodwill, at the first send-off at least."

"So it's no the Cause come up again!" said the insinuating Willie Wilson. "I'm fine and pleased for that. I'm a' for living easy now," he giggled, "wi' slabs o' roasted beef like the English, if I can get it. The Cause brought us naething but wersh\* meat, and dooms little o' that. Ay, I thocht ye'd be ower gash† to start the Cause again."

"It's the Cause, Willie," answered the Master, "and it's not the Cause—if by the Cause ye mean Chartism. It's the Cause in a new shape. But ye'll understand better if ye'll a' have the patience to let me explain. And as for our old friend M'Cree's word about a chairman—this is my own meeting, and ye're my own friends, invited into my own house, and I'll be my own chairman. I think that's but reasonable."

"Hoot ay!" exclaimed Wilson, taking upon him to reply, as having the fresh flavour of speech upon his lips. "It's good logic enough. Say awa'!"

M'Cree *bu-h-h'd* in sullen assent, and the Master rose to light his candles, as if he thought it desirable to have his friends clearly under his eye. When the friends saw the gleam of the two silver candlesticks they gazed stupidly at them a moment, and then looked upon the illuminated countenance of the Master.

"They maun be worth a bonny penny," said Willie Wilson.

"I wonder ye ha'e keppit them sae lang, Hutcheon," said M'Cree, with the evident intention of him who once murmured, "Why was not this sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"

Hutcheon said no word for a moment, but he looked round upon his company and considered them. With the exceptions of O'Rhea, Steven, and Hamish, they were old in years or sick unto death, and they were timid, obstinate, and unbelieving; but the Master viewed them through that glamour of romantic feeling which is as enveloping as Divine Love, and therefore he saw them not as they were, but as he wished to believe them to be. He imputed his

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\* Wersh—tasteless.

† Gash—sharp.

own righteousness, and his own hope, his own charity, and his own sense of life to these poor, dull, hard, beaten and bruised fragments of humanity, and so in all sincerity he addressed them with friendliness and confidence, open as a door of welcome.

"This is what it is," he began, and his benevolent smile creased his cheeks and made his seigniorial nose seem longer and more overpowering. "Ye mind well that on that terrifu' morning eight years ago, when we saw my brither Geordie and our old friend here, O'Rhea (there's no danger in speaking his name here among friends only), ye mind when we saw them clear off from the cove across the water that my brither's last words to me were, 'Stick to the Cause!' Well, day and night ever sin-syne his words have been humming and bumming in my head, and sougning and singing about my heart, but I could see no opening for doing a thing. But I aye thought it ower, and the more I thought and the more I saw, the more I came to understand that what we had called the Cause was windy, noisy, blethering nonsense. Understand me; not the real Cause, the care of the folk, but the way of setting about that Cause."

"Ay," broke in M'Cree, "we should mak' a Revolution, and ding down Mōnarchy, Aristō-cracy, and Plutō cracy!"

The Master did not relish having his thread broken. He fixed his eye on M'Cree, and with a touch of his old severity said:

"Ay, ding down everybody but Sanders M'Cree. M'Cree's a fine hand at revolutions. He has seen so many of them—in his newspapers."

O'Rhea sniggered, the others crackled with unused laughter, and M'Cree himself glowered and blew his terrible Roman nose. The Master resumed suavely:

"Ha'e a minute's patience, and ye'll hear what I would be at. It grew plain to me that leaving off work, and marching about, and roaring for Rights o' Man and Five Points was no way of getting anything but the good hot skelping which we did get, like idle orra loons. And it was borne in on me as true as Gospel that there was no getting

away from the auld-farrant doctrine, 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.'"

"Genesis," giggled Willie Wilson, "third and something."

"*Bu-h-h!*" growled M'Cree.

"So," continued the Master, "I set about doing something to help on what seemed to me the true Cause, to make it easier a bit for our folk to get bread and sup. I contrived the 'Whamleerie,' the end o' whilk ye all know. I'll allow I was gey and cast down about that. I thought and thought, and the more I thought the more I saw the same thing; the power o' mills and engines and machines growing more and more, rising about us like the tide"—and his voice became more sonorous and vibrant—"to sweep us away and swallow us up, as the sea sweeps away and swallows up a castle o' sand made by bairns ayont the links. When the bairns see that, what do they do but loup from their castle and run to the bents? And when folk can fight no longer wi' mills and machinery, there's aye left to them to run away. But where to?"

"Ay, that's it," said Willie Wilson. "That's a nailer."

"Well," continued the Master, with a controlling eye on Willie, "there came into my mind a word of my brither Geordie's, 'If ye cannot grow and thrive in the auld gr'und there's hamely land in the world yet.' And about the same time there sounded in my ear another word, 'It's the sun ye need, the sun and the open air.' And ever sin-syne the words have been wi' me like the owercome o' a bonny sang, 'There's hamely land in the world yet,' and 'It's the sun ye need, the sun and the air.'"

"It's emigration ye mean!" exclaimed M'Cree promptly. "*Bu-h-h!* We're ower auld to think o' going off wi' a hop, skip, and jump to Canada or Australia to work hard at howkin' and pleughin'."

"I ance kent a man," murmured Willie Wilson, "that gaed to Canada, and twal' year after he cam' back a sight waur off than he gaed awa'."

"By Gosh!" cried Steven, "I'll no gang howkin'! be

d—d to me! I'll handle a musket wi' onybody, and I'll stick to the Maister, but——”

“Haud your whisht, Steven,” said the Master, “and let me teem \* my shuttle, all of ye. There's here no question, I assure ye, of Canada or Australia, or any place that poor folk emigrate to. This is another thing altogether, as different from them as cheese is from chalk. And, even if the word were ‘emigrate,’ wha's he would speak o' being auld when there's the Cause—the Real Cause—to be won, if no for himself, for the young generation? This is the sole and only chance ye have had, or they will have belike, and it behoves ye no to miss it. If ye give it the go-by for yourselves and the young folk, you and they will sink deeper and deeper in the moss of poortith and oppression.”

“It's gey and easy speakin’,” said Willie Wilson, wagging his head. “But if and supposin' we gang aff flittin' awa' to the back o' yond, it canna be done wi'out siller, and whaur's the siller to come frae? That's the nailer!”

“The expense of the whole flitting will be mine!” said the Master with a wide sweep of his hand. “I have the siller!”

There was a moment's silence, while each looked greedily at the others, as if grudging that any but himself should have the opportunity offered of levying on the Master's siller—all except Steven, who winked aside to Hamish, as if in anticipation of the ploys to come.

“And whaur's the place ye ha'e in your mind, sirs?” asked M'Cree, now humbler and more interested.

“ANDAMAN,” answered the Master as tenderly as if he were savouring his sweetheart's name.

“And whaur's that?” demanded M'Cree.

“It's a bonny place in the Bay of Bengal—an island.”

“And wha'sh an island?” demanded M'Cree.

“What's an island?” said the Master, turning to Hamish. “Speak up for the credit of your G'ography, and let's hear!”

“An island,” piped Hamish promptly, as if he were an-

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\* Teem—Empty.

swering the schoolmaster, "is a piece of land altogether surrounded by water."

"Hoch! That's a'!" exclaimed Steven. "We ken mair than ae island in 'Freedom'—dinna we, Hamish?"

Hamish nodded.

"Ay," murmured Willie Wilson, "an' there's the Shetland Islands and the Orkney Islands I've heard o'. But this island, I suppose, has the watter o' the Bay o' Bengal a' round about it, and a curn o' Bengal tigers growlin' on it, I daursay."

"Fient a tiger! Is there, Fergus?" asked the Master, turning to O'Rhea. And then looking again at the company, "Fergus knows the place."

"I know the place, of course," said O'Rhea. "A lovely place! Freedom and plenty. Little to do and a good deal to get. Work when you like and play when you like; no masters to hound you on, but only a handful of harmless black natives. That's the sort of place it is. And as for tigers—when we get there," and he glanced boldly at the Master, "the most ferocious beast will be Steven or myself."

Out of the laughter with which that was received came the voice of M'Cree.

"*Bu-h-h!* Are ye gaun?"

"Me!" exclaimed Fergus, promptly, glaring on M'Cree as if to meet a challenge. "Certainly I'm going! Have you any objection, M'Cree?"

"Nane ava! Nane in the world! No!" answered M'Cree as promptly. "I only wondered if the notion o' gaun was yours."

"The notion of going," answered the Master, "is mine. Fergus happened to name the place, and I got spiering about it; and I soon said to myself, 'Andaman's the place for me and the folk.'"

"Andaman," murmured Willie Wilson, as if to fix the name in his consideration.

"To make an end of a long story," continued the Master, "having made up my mind about the place, I wrote a scribev to the Queen, spiering for leave to go there, and offering to

buy as muckle land as we needed, if so be the price wasna altogether beyond my means. And by that token here's the answer from the Queen hersel'!" and he took the document from beneath his hand.

"An ansher frae the Queen hersel'!" exclaimed M'Cree. "That's grand telling, sirs!"

"Fergus will read it to you," said the Master, handing the document to O'Rhea.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### HOW THE QUEEN'S LETTER WAS RECEIVED.

FERGUS took the document with a touch of involuntary abashment. He smoothed it out, stood up, and began to read without giving an eye to the company. "*Whereas,*" he began with a broken and hurried uncertainty of voice, "*our trusty liege, James, the Master of Hutcheon,*" but as he went on he resumed confidence in the sounding phrases he had himself invented, and he delivered them with deliberate effect.

The Master had modestly deputed the reading to O'Rhea, but he sat with serene self-possession. Manifestly he regarded his people's affairs as of such supreme moment that the Queen's letter appeared to him no more than the keystone of the bridge he had been building for them. He gazed far over the heads of the company, and now and then let his eyes drop to observe in the candlelight the strongly marked faces, upon which went to and fro bewildered expressions of curiosity, amazement, incredulity, and a dawning delight. Their regard swung between O'Rhea and the Master, but on the ring of a stronger phrase than common, it was turned askance for an instant on each other to see how the words were taken. When O'Rhea delivered the final words, "*Rajah or King of Andaman,*" with a brazen flourish, added with impressiveness, "*signed Victoria R.,*"

and sat down, there was silence for a breathing space or two. They stole glances at each other, or looked upon the table, and at length they all with one accord turned their eyes upon the Master. It was plain they were viewing him critically, and it was also plain that had he shown less self-possession and authority, had his eye in the smallest degree quailed or wavered in meeting theirs, his kingship would have been received with a burst of laughter; for in them, as in children or barbarians, there was but the thinner partition between belief and unbelief, between reverence and derision, and the partition was not an affair of reason or evidence, but merely of feeling. The Master sat charged with dignity and calm authority, and they bowed to him in their hearts and were serious.

O'Rhea noted these things with sharp and anxious eyes, as he smoothed and re-smoothed the extraordinary document under his hand; so he at least was relieved when the silence was broken by Willie Wilson.

"Weel," said Willie, "I will say this: it's a maist astonishin' and extraordinar' honour the Queen has done to the Maister; that I will say."

"I take the honour," said the Master quietly, "no as done to me myself, but as done to the auld name I hold; for the Masters—or I should say the Lords—of Hutcheon have borne rule and authority in their day, and the Queen knows it."

"Quite right, sir," said O'Rhea, much relieved, "that's the way to look at it."

He was further rejoiced by a remark from M'Cree; for though it was clear the words were meant to belittle the Master's kingship, they helped to make it appear more feasible.

"As I understand," quoth the terrible Roman, "a Rajah out there is no muckle mair than a laird here."

"Not quite that, M'Cree," observed O'Rhea quickly, "not altogether that."

"By Jingo, no!" exclaimed Steven. "I've seen wi' my ain een a Rajah out there as grand as the muckle black de'il."



"Of course you have," said O'Rhea, "and so have I. But M'Cree sees everything with a microscope."

The Master smiled, M'Cree *bu-h-h'd*, but the others did not understand.

"A ruler's responsibility and authority," said the Master, "doesna depend upon the size of his kingdom."

"Well, kingdom here, kingdom there," said Willie Wilson, "it's a grand honour the Queen has done's a' in sending that letter to the Maister. The mair I think o't the mair I'm took wi't."

"Ay," said M'Cree, "it's a bonny write."

"Wrote wi' her ain hand, I daursay," murmured the consumptive.

"No, Robbie," said the Master, "I shouldna think that, for wi' all her writing she must have a routh o' clerks at her command. I reckon there's only the signature in her own lady's hand."

"*Bu-h-h*," growled M'Cree. "Can a body ha'e a look at it?"

The demand made O'Rhea nervous again. With a glance he referred to the Master, who signified that M'Cree's request might be granted. But Fergus would not permit the document to wander far from his fingers. He rose himself and took it for M'Cree's inspection. The Roman Father *bu-h-h'd* and held the paper an instant at arm's length; and then he laid it down to put on his horn spectacles that he might examine it more closely. But that O'Rhea would not endure. He removed the paper, as if he supposed M'Cree had finished its inspection; and upon M'Cree's protesting, he declared they must get on with business.

"Ay, that's it," said Willie Wilson. "We maun get on wi' business. I keep thinkin' o' the words, and if I'm no mistaken, the Queen has laid her commands upon us a'."

"Ye're right, Willie," said the Master, "she has."

"That's the ticket!" exclaimed Steven, winking with enthusiasm at Hamish. "'The Queen commands and we must all obey, so over the hills and far away!' Eh, Hamish? Demmit!"

"Truly and exactly," said the Master, taking the document from O'Rhea and looking at it, "it's upon me, James, the Master of Hutcheon, the Queen has laid her commands, and it's me she'll hold responsible; but that's just because she thinks I'm the man in authority here;" and he looked round the table and met the eyes of one and another, and of M'Cree in particular.

"To be sure," said Willie Wilson.

"Demmit! Of course!" exclaimed Steven. "We maun uphau'd discipline!"

"And," continued the Master, folding the document and putting it in his pocket, "just as the notion of going to Andaman is mine, and the expense will be mine, so the responsibility's mine and the Queen's authority is mine. But," and he leaned forward on the table and smiled upon the company, "I need the advice, in carrying out the business, and the help of my old friends, the old friends of the Cause, and that's what for ye're sitting round my table."

"I understand that fine," said Willie Wilson; "that's straight-forrit speaking."

"I want nobody to help that'll not be with me heart and soul—nobody," repeated the Master, looking steadily at M'Cree. "So ilka ane that's no for putting his hand to the plough had better turn out o' the furrow this very night; for there's no time to be lost in parley and elishmaclaver; ye heard the Queen's command was '*secrecy and dispatch*.'"

"Ay," cried Steven, "smart's the word! By my trews!"

There was again a pause while each looked at the other and held back from being first to make offer of service. The consumptive Hay leaned forward to speak, but he was overtaken with a fit of coughing, which his friends politely allowed to have way.

"His hoast's gey bad the night. I wonder," murmured Wilson to his neighbour M'Cree, "I wonder that the Maister should ha' bid the poor chield to this colloque."

"I just wanted to spier," gasped the exhausted consumptive, "is there caller air—warm—sunny? The doctors aye said a dry, warm kintra would be the salvation o' me!"

and the hollow-eyed, hollow-cheeked wreck who had once been the strongest man in the country-side looked with fierce eagerness in the Master's face. "And fresh fruit is there?—oranges and things o' that kind? I had some oranges at the New Year, and they did me a warld o' good! If there's they things in the place, I'll gang though it were on my hands and knees!"

"And go ye shall, old friend," said the Master with sympathy in his voice and the glisten of a tear in his eye, and he reached out and shook Hay by the hand. "There's all the things in Andaman that ye need—all without trouble!—fine warm air, plenty o' fruit and flowers growing ready to your hand, and a sun and sea kindly enough to burn away and wash out all the disease in the world!" He paused a moment with melting heart. His prevailing kindness and pity swept away the severity aroused by their timidity and their suspicion. "Come," said he in a softer and more gracious voice than he had yet used to the company, "Donald Hay for certain needs the change the most, but ye will know there's a hantle more will win a heaven for the crossing there compared with what they have here. Think of the wives and the weans, your sons and your dochters, and all they have to go through at hame, and up wi' your hearts and voices and speak out; wha's for helping me to get the folk ready for Andaman? I'll e'en go so far as to pay every man for the time he spends on the service; ilka man that helps'll bear office under me as a member of my Council."

"*Bu-h-h!*" cried M'Cree, now red with expectation. "That's a fair, grand, and generous offer, sirs, and no leal lover o' the Cause can say it nay! We'll a' help! What do you say, lads?"

"To be sure!" said Willie Wilson, with cheerful abandon.

"Of course you will," sniggered O'Rhea, and cast a glance of amazement at the Master.

Could it be that Hutcheon was blind to their self-seeking? For it was plain that all were bent on their own aggrandisement, all save the simple and faithful and one-

eyed soldier, who nudged and winked at Hamish as if to keep the boy and himself alive to the greatness of the issues that were being discussed.

"I understand perfectly, Fergus," said the Master in a low voice. "But never mind; it all comes in the day's darg."

The Master saw their greed and their self-seeking as clearly as O'Rhea; yet he was not therefore moved to scorn but rather to a tenderer pity, for (he considered) had they not been rendered what they were by the terrible tyranny of circumstance? and was it possible for men who could hardly see from one week's end to another to have his heavenly vision of the beauty and peace and delight of Andaman? And surely in such abundant pity and deep sympathy the Master found a truer account of human nature than O'Rhea could have put together with all his sharp wits.

"And wha," said M'Cree, "will ye ask to jine?"

"Our own folk first," said the Master; "after that as many as care, and as we have room for in the ship."

"There shouldna be ower mony. Let it be our ain fish-guts for our ain sea-maw," said M'Cree, obviously thinking of the small share there would be for each if a great crowd were to be partakers of the Master's bounty.

The Master quickly rebuked him.

"There'll be plenty and to spare for all when once we sit down in Andaman, and a ship'll have to be provided, be it for twenty or for twa hundred."

"By my trews!" exclaimed Steven, who had been pondering and winking at Hamish the while, "ye maun ha'e a Native Conteeigent, Hutcheon, sir, to keep guard and for sentry go! Me an' Fergus understand the black deevils! We'll drill them up for ye! *Eyes Right! 'Tention!*—eh, Hamish? Demmit!"

At that they all laughed, the Master as loud as any.

"Well, Steven," said he, "we'll have a Native Contingent when we get there, and ye shall be the Commander."

Then up rose M'Cree, and cleared his brazen throat, with the evident purpose of making a speech.

"Bide a wee, M'Cree," said the Master. "Take your glasses," and he reached out for the grey-beard, "and we'll drink success to Andaman." The glasses were filled, and the Master rose. "And mind," said he, "The Queen's command is 'secrecy and dispatch.' Dispatch is my business, but secrecy is everybody's. There must be no clashing and claiiking about what we're doing; nobody must know except them that's going."

"Ay, guidsakes!" exclaimed Willie Wilson, "an' we maun swear it! An' we maun tak' aith to be true to our leader, and eident in the Cause! Let's ha'e the auld Chart-ist shak'!

They all rose. The Master with a smile stretched out his right hand, and each seized a finger. It was odd that there were just fingers enough for all the company, omitting O'Rhea. Without hesitation, and with a scornful glance at the others, Fergus grasped the body of the Master's hand, with his thumb on the wrist. He smiled and smiled again. They all frowned and looked askance upon him. What was the meaning of his action?—that he meant to be greater than any of them?

"Now," said the Master, "let's drink a willie-waught to Andaman!"

"Andaman!" they cried.

"The Andaman expedeection," croaked M'Cree. "Success to't."

They all tossed off their glasses, even the consumptive Hay and the asthmatic M'Kay, and Hamish looked on and wondered at the strange conclusion of a sitting never to be forgotten by him.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

## AFFAIRS OF STATE, AND OTHER MATTERS.

THE Master's venture, when its sails had been thus shaken out to popular favour, slipped forward bravely. Preparations for Andaman were begun at once by the practical and active O'Rhea. With an admirable self-control that daring adventurer professed to be in complete accord with the Master's views of his own authority and dignity, and of the necessity for consultation with the Council which had been constituted, though in his heart he cursed all these things as the absurd make-believe of schoolboys at play. He was instant in season and out of season, constant in his efforts to save the Master trouble, unremitting in his endeavours to take all the wearisome burden of details on his own broad shoulders. In the rig of a sailor he frequented the harbour and the shipyards to discover a likely vessel for sale, his desire being set on a top-sail schooner; and all the while he maintained a lookout for mariners who were of likely desperation to suit his real purpose. He had one passage of difference with the Master, after which he appeared as complaisant as king could desire, for he saw there was nothing to be gained by thwarting Hutcheon's whimsies, and he was resolved to do and say nothing that might interfere with his design of having the conduct of all the important preparations in his own hands. The difference arose at the end of the first week, when the Master remarked that the Members of the Council had better be paid weekly.

"You don't really mean to pay them?" exclaimed O'Rhea.

"And what for no?" said the Master.

"Pay them for nothing?" cried O'Rhea with some heat. "Pay the loons in the loan for shouting 'hooray'! Pay every mother's son and daughter for being good enough to accept your invitation to go to Andaman at no cost to themselves!"

"But," said the Master, becoming more serious and lofty

of visage, "it's only the Members of the Council I have chosen to advise with that I mean to pay."

"Council!" cried O'Rhea, and laid his face on his arm and laughed. "It's too ridiculous—absurd beyond everything! Excuse me, Hutcheon, but I did think that was only a joke of yours about the Council!"

"It was not a joke!" said the Master, calm, but provoked to the highest offence. "Moreover, *they* did not think it a joke; and my word is passed to them, and paid they shall be—paid every week end."

"Oh, very well," said O'Rhea, now rather alarmed that he saw the Master's offence. "But I suppose you will consider that a sum about as much as they would make by weaving will be enough for them?"

"I will not consider anything of the kind, Fergus!" declared the Master. "It is not agreeable with my honour or my position that the old friends that serve me as counselors should have no more siller in their pouches than if they were weaving wabs for hard task-masters. They shall have twice as much. Whatever ilk ane has been in the way of making, twice as much as that shall be paid him by me!"

"Very well, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea humbly, while in his heart he cursed the Council and the Master's preposterous view of his dignity. "The money is yours, and the whole business is yours, and it is only for me to accept your arrangements."

"There is another thing, Fergus," said the Master, resuming his more gracious manner. "Ye have been very busy about my affairs—busier than all the rest of us put together, and it cannot be that ye have a great deal of siller."

"What!" exclaimed O'Rhea. "You are not proposing to pay *me*, Hutcheon? No, no! That would be too much of an insult."

"It would, Fergus. I was not proposing that; but I am at a loss. As I say, ye cannot have a hantle o' siller, and I have plenty; and ye have expenses; well, then, what is there I can do to make ye comfortable?"

"Nothing, Hutcheon, nothing," said O'Rhea, promptly

taking advantage of the position to show himself in an agreeable light. "This is a labour of love with me."

"But even the labourer of love is worthy of his hire."

"Then give it me!" cried the adroit O'Rhea, flinging out his scarred, hairy hand to the Master. "Your liking, Hutcheon, your friendship, your confidence!"

"Ye have them, Fergus!" said the Master with sparkling eye, taking the proffered hand in his strong, steady grasp. "And I thank ye on my own account, on my dead brither's account, and on account of the poor folk ye're working to help!"

"By George, Hutcheon!" said O'Rhea, "you have a stronger grip than any man I know! Your fingers feel as if they were cased in iron!"

And thus the bond of trust was sealed between them.

The five members of the Council were paid (Hamish, at the Master's bidding, setting down the payments in a penny version-book, and thenceforward proudly regarding himself as the King's Secretary)—they were paid, and they thought vastly more of the Master and his scheme on that account. They had already been impressed by his new authority and eloquence ("He has mair gift o' the gab than I gi'ed him credit for," was a repeated saying of Willie Wilson), and they had been attracted by his promises. Now his words had become a tangible reality, and they lauded him and the "Flitting" to the skies. They became as earnest for the new Cause as years before they had been for the old, and they were on the instant as zealous and fervid in urging it upon their families and friends as if it were a new message of Salvation. They did not yet forsake their looms altogether, but they would be driven forth in the middle of the morning or of the afternoon, by effusion of feeling and the itch of money in their pockets, to Jean Frazer's "shop" at the bottom of the loan, where they would sit over their dram-glasses and discuss their prospects by the hour; the evening they devoted to making secret proselytes to their gospel—all except Steven, who, having little power of speech, earned his pay as Commander of the uniformed Native Contingent by cocking his bonnet with a more martial air and



jutting his handsome calves and winking at the lasses more gallantly than ever.

Of all that the Master saw little, for he was much from home. He was either occupied in the town with the business of his inheritance from his brother or of the expedition to Andaman, or else he was engaged with the affairs of love. His sweetheart was not far off, and he could not let a day pass without something of the sustenance of communion with her. They commonly met on the margin of Freedom, which, though to Hamish it appeared a weary distance from Ilkastane, was only about as many furlongs off as to the legs of extreme youth it seemed miles. There was no arrangement that that wild and breezy region should be their trysting-place, but the Master had chanced upon her there one day on his return from a business visit to his shred of landed estate on the borders of the moss, and there by a tacit understanding they continued to meet. The Master had once affectionately inquired of her why she was so fond of taking her daily walks there, and the answer was characteristic of her bright, fanciful, but withal melancholy nature.

"Oh, I do not know!" she exclaimed, with a swelling sigh, as if for something unattainable and inexpressible. "It is because I like it, and I do not like it. The wild grass and the rushes, and the beather and the running water, and the boys with cows that moo far off, and dogs that bark, make me think of the past and the future, and everything, and I feel nice and happy, with a bird singing in my heart, or sad and empty, and I wish to die. Do you know that feeling, *mon ami*?"

But "*mon ami*," for all his whimsical dreaming and his unfamiliarity with any but the sadder and more sordid sides of life, had a practical, Scottish sense of the economic value of existence.

"No, hinny, I do not know the feeling," he answered seriously. "Oh, I understand fine what ye would be at, but I have never had the feeling myself, and I would not encourage it. I doubt it means," said he, smiling tenderly on her, "an idle mind; and I have aye had the folk and

their troubles and trials to think of, and now I have Andaman and the arrangements for that—and I have you, my dawtie, and with all they things I can never find it in me to wish to die.”

“Do you not love me?” she then suddenly demanded with a clouded, doubtful look.

“Love ye!” he said, and his voice and eyes were suffused with tenderness. “Spier at me if I love all that’s bonny and sweet, and leal and true!—if I——” but his dithyrambs were interrupted by the fairy little lady.

“Then do not preach to me any more. Call me ‘*m’amie*,’” she said with a pretty pout.

“That sounds to me like ‘mammy,’ and ye’re not that,” he said with a smile. “I suppose it’s French, and I’m no hand at the French.”

“But you must learn, *mon ami*, because I am French.”

“Ye’re not just altogether that,” said he, “for half of ye should be Scottish.”

“Well, just to please you,” said she, “I will be as Scottish as I am able, though I like being French best. But you must be a nice, noble lover, and let me be French sometimes. And, if you please, do not preach at me, *mon ami*. Say beautiful things to me—you say beautiful things sometimes—but do not preach,” she insisted. “My *gouvernante* preached to make me different from what I was, and I did not like it. Tell me: do you not like me as I am?”

“Like ye to be as ye are?” he exclaimed. “I wouldna alter a curl of your bonny head, my dawtie.”

“Say ‘*m’amie*,’” she requested.

“Maw-mie,” he said, “but——”

“No, no,” she insisted. “You must not say ‘but’! You have said a pretty thing, and you must not preach.”

“I was just going to say this, maw-mie,” he persisted gently. “Andaman is afore us, and we must think of ruling and advising and helping the folk when we get them there. We must both think of that, for ye’re to be aye by my side helping and advising with me.”

“Always in Andaman, both of us?” she asked.

“Surely,” he said. “Will we no?”

"I cannot tell," she said. "Do not say more of it now. We are in Freedom, and Andaman is far off. Let us sit here and look at the trout in the water. Oh, here are blue-bells!—the blue-bells of Scotland, are they not, *mon ami*?"

That was the character of their talk during these walks in Freedom—he striving gently to be serious when he was not dithyrambic (and much inclined, it must be admitted, to "preach," like all his race), for his love for this bright little humming-bird of a lady, no more than any other interest of his life, could he take lightly; and she evading his best efforts with smiles, and changing, fleeting notes of vivacity and all the instinctive wiles of womankind. There was little direct love-making, for Elsie M'Cree was always of the company to play propriety; and though Elsie discreetly and generously pretended to be occupied with gathering flowers and plaiting rushes out of earshot, and often out of eyeshot, singing to herself the while to let it be understood she was not noting the behaviour of the lovers, yet they took small advantage of her discretion and generosity. They would stroll hand in hand by the winding burn, and he would look down upon her with protective tenderness ("she is such a bonny wee thing!" he thought), and she would look up in sweet reverence or in bird-like shrewdness ("He is so great and good!" she thought, or, "Oh, what a terribly serious, dear, big thing he is!"). Even when they sat down upon a moss-grown granite boulder, he was so shy that the utmost familiarity of love he attained was to kiss her two little white hands, while she, demure and mischievous as a kitten, would at times permit herself to tug his sweeping moustache, pinch his ear, or set his bonnet awry upon his head, and then skip away; laughing half in fear of what she had done.

That agreeable philandering went on for a week or two, till one day George Lepine met the party of three as it was leaving Freedom. A single look at George's face made it plain that he had been somehow informed of these trysts, and the Master at once felt he was in a false position, and wondered that he had not thought of it before. In a mutual

unexpressed desire for explanation both the men fell behind the girls.

"You come here often, I daresay, Mr. Hutcheon," said George seriously.

"Maist every afternoon," answered the Master.

"Do you remember coming to see me once to point out that I was jeopardising a girl's good name?"

"Dod!" exclaimed the Master, "and you're right, man! Just see how ye forget that when ye're in yourself! I suppose there's the wish natural to every man to keep his courting a secret. I suppose that, without thinking about it one way or t'other, ye feel there's something sweet and bonny atween you twa that no other body should intermeddle wi'. But, of course, I'll do the right thing. I must come and have a word with the Bailie."

"You want to marry my sister?" queried George, with open, considering eyes.

"Surely!" answered the Master. "What other?" George said nothing, but stepped along thoughtfully. "Do you think," demanded the Master, "your father will say me 'No'?"

"Oh, no," answered George. "It's not that he'll do. You're the Master of Hutcheon and you've come into a fortune. I am thinking," he said with a sneering laugh, "he may be glad to get his daughter off on such good terms."

"What for that?" asked the Master, half stopping, with his gaze fixed on the young man's face.

"Oh," said the young man, "only because he has a notion of marrying again."

"Is that so, man?" exclaimed the Master. "Weel, it's natural, I daursay, in a man that's no so very auld, to weary o' lying his lone."

"Ay," said George, with a sudden gush of bitterness, "but he has lain his lone so long he might have finished up as he had gone on, or at least have turned his eye on somebody more beiseeming his age. How would you like, Mr. Hutcheon," he burst forth, "to see your father courting your sweetheart?"

"Hoot, man," exclaimed the Master. "Ye don't mean that!"

"But I do! That's the very thing I do mean."

The Master more closely considered the appearance and demeanour of the young man, and noted that he was less carefully and elegantly brushed and buttoned than was his wont, and that his step had lost much of its remarkable spring. It was plain he was wading deep in trouble and perplexity, and the Master's sympathy went out to him.

"Eh, man," said he, "but I'm real sorry for ye! I can see ye're just foundered and forfoughten! Is there a' thing I can do to get ye out of that and help ye ower the stile?"

"You're very kind," said George, despondently, "but I've got myself into the mess, and I'm thinking I must get myself out. Up till now I have been able to say nothing one way or another. It's hard for Elsie to fence and fend him off, and me just to sit still and look on."

"Ay," said the Master, "it's a gey mishanter! But ye must speak out, man, in case the worst may happen. I tell ye what. The morn's Saturday; I'll come in the afternoon to speak to the Bailie about my own affair, and ye'd better out wi' yours at the same time, and I'se uphold ye in it; for Elsie deserves all I can do for her."

And that was agreed to. George admitted the Master's support might aid him, for the Ballie, he knew, had a high opinion of Hutcheon.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"OH, LOVE, LOVE!—"

HAD the Master supposed for a moment that the issue of his own suit to the Bailie was likely to be in doubt, it is probable that even he would have hesitated to offer help to

George in his desperate case. But he had no doubt. Why should he have? He was the Master of Hutcheon, the possessor of a considerable fortune, and he was invested with great dignity and honour by the Queen; but not for these reasons did he look forward serenely to his interview with the Bailie. The true inwardness of his confident condition was not that he thought so much of himself, but that he thought so little of the Bailie. He loved the Bailie's daughter, and intended to marry her "in due course," and he was about to give himself the pleasure (which he had somewhat delayed) of informing the Bailie of these facts. That was all. The Bailie was not the Queen nor the Duke of Gordon, nor even an honest bonnet laird, to be sued cap in hand for permission to wed; he was, in the Master's eyes, of no more account than M'Cree, who had in the distant past brought him north from the house of bondage at Penicuik.

So on Saturday afternoon, with a warm heart and an easy mind, the Master took his way to Corbie Ha', arrayed in his best blue coat in honour of the occasion. He was, in truth, about to encounter one of the determining crises of his life, but he had no hint and he made no guess of that, and he went to meet his fate calmly and steadily. He took Hamish with him, because the boy begged that he might again see the Garden of Corbie Ha' (the gooseberries were beginning to ripen), and O'Rhea lay in the cottage just over the Bailie's garden wall—lay like a mottled spider beneath a leaf at the end of one of the strands of his monstrous web. But of the significance of these facts more anon.

In order to appreciate the temper in which the Master found the Bailie's family, it is necessary to precede him by some minutes and note their converse.

The weather was warm; the Saturday dinner or lunch was over; and coffee was served in the garden under a spreading chestnut just without the dining-room window. Near to them in the sun was Aimée's cockatoo on his perch, and a step farther off in the grass her cat watching the bird with the eyes of a basilisk. The Bailie and his son both sat in low basket chairs and smoked their cigars in

silence, with close jealous eyes on each other and on Elsie, who chanced to sit between them, inflaming the hearts of both with her full, sensuous beauty, which was as that of a red rose in June when it bursts from bud to flower. The languid warm air hung as it were dripping from the chestnut leaves, and the only sound was the drowsy voice of the cockatoo muttering behind his beak, while he skinned his eyes over with their horny lids and now and then turned one bright orb on the cat—“Cocky wants some toast. . . . Warm as a pie. . . . Warm as a pie!”

“Swear, Cocky, you beast!” cried the Bailie, flinging away the end of his cigar, and sitting up with the veins of his head surcharged with over-heated blood. “Make him swear, Aimée.”

Cocky raised his crest and began uttering certain uncouth unintelligible sounds which O’Rhea had said were Malayan oaths—and no one could contradict him.

“Oh, papa!” cried Aimée. “How can you encourage him to be so wicked!”

“Swear more, you rascal!” cried the Bailie. “Elsie, you speak to him, and see what he say!”

Elsie rose and went to the bird. But she spoke soothingly to him, and her quaint, cooing tones allayed the passion which the Bailie’s loud voice had roused.

“Kiss Cocky!—kiss, kiss!” said the bird.

Elsie bent her lovely mouth to the bird.

“Ah, take care,” cried the Bailie, jumping up, “he will bite!”

But Cocky most perfunctorily touched the ripe red lips with his beak, and uttered a “click,” which he had been taught as the sound of a kiss.

“Ah, now!” exclaimed the Bailie by Elsie’s side. “Mc, I think that fowl a dam fool.”

“And is he auld, sir, too?” asked Elsie, in quaint, sweet simplicity of tone.

“*Comment!* How?” said the Bailie. “What you mean?”

“They say, ye ken, sir, ‘There’s nae fool like an auld fool.’”

"Ah," said the Bailie, smiling; but his smile changed to a frown when he heard a suppressed laugh from his son. He continued, however, "How old, now, do you think me I am?"

"Oh," said Elsie, with a gentle, rallying laugh which could not offend, "I couldna guess, sir. Nae doubt ye're gey auld. I've heard my father say that him and you was young together."

"What think you," asked the Bailie, "of sixty-two year?"

"Sixty-twa!" exclaimed Elsie. "Eh, me! I thought ye'd been aulder than that!"

It was at that moment that Jaques announced the Master of Hutcheon. Elsie slipped off to Aimée's side, and together they disappeared into the bosky depth of the garden, where trees and bushes seemed to reach out straining branches or trailing tendrils to embrace or to touch their sweet bodies as they went by. The Bailie looked after them with fast-winking eyes and agitated thought; and it must be allowed that either was enough to move an anchorite or to warm the fishy blood of St. Anthony himself—the one small, but plump and sprightly as a bird, and the other with the height and proportions of a goddess and the gait of a queen. The poor Bailie sighed like a furnace, and returned to the consciousness of Jaques's presence.

"Eh, what?" he said, staring at Jaques, while his son noted him with narrow gaze.

"*Monsieur le Maître, Monsieur le Bailli,*" answered Jaques.

"Ah, *oui*," answered the Bailie. "We are not in ceremony with the Master. Conduct him here, Jaques."

In a second or two the Master appeared, leading Hamish by the hand—Hamish clad in the glory of the Gordon colours.

"Ah," exclaimed the Bailie, "the little boy! the little soldier Ecosais! You are welcome, *M'sieu le Maître.*"

"I have a word for your private ear, Bailie," said the Master, standing tall above the stout manufacturer and graciously inclining his head.



"I am your servant, *M'sieu le Maître*," said the Bailie, bowing low; for, as always, the Master's manner, the Master's eye, and the Master's nose dominated him. "You will take a glass of wine, *m'sieu*? George, bring a bottle of claret."

"I thank you, Bailie," said the Master, arresting George with his eye. "But I'm no for the claret-wine the now; it's but the ninth hour of the day, so to speak, and it's only at night that I indulge me wi' a glass of usquebagh!"

"How it please you, *m'sieu*," said the Bailie. "It is equal. And the boy—the little soldier Ecossais—will run into the garden and put the nose to the roses; but he will not pluck the roses, because the roses is for the pretty ladies, and not for the soldiers Ecossais; for them is drums (*r-ran-plan-plan*) and swords, *hein*?"

"Ay," said the boy, with the disjointed boastfulness of childhood, "our folk was aye men o' the sword; and we're gaun to ha'e a Native Contingent."

The Bailie stared with amazement to hear the boy thus answer him.

"He's an auld-farrant chield," said the Master, with a severe eye on the boy. "Now, go your ways, as the Bailie tells ye, my laddie."

So Hamish, after a lingering look at Cocky, disappeared into the shady depths of the garden, and the Master sat down.

"Now," said the Bailie, "at your service, *m'sieu*." (His son sat a little way off with his head thrown back.)

"I'll be three-and-thirty come Martinmas, Bailie," began the Master.

The Bailie bowed.

"It is four-five minute when it was said to me, as I say to you, *m'sieu*, 'I thought you was older nor that.'"

"I daursay," said the Master, "I look older. My life has aye, wi' one thing and another, been thick with trouble, as the wood o' Maiden Craig is thick wi' trees, and that, I daursay, has told upon me. But I'm strong as an oak. Fient an hour's ill health have I had all my life long, and I

can do a day's work wi' any man. I have never drucken except in reason, nor eaten—nor any other thing.”

“I understand, *m'sieu*,” said the Bailie. “It is very well, *m'sieu*. It is not that many men is able to say, if they will speak the true.”

“Dinna think, Bailie,” said the Master, “that I'm saying that for my credit's sake. God forbid! The Almighty has made me like that—to go straight on—just as He has made other men to go withershins. Weel, I'm the last o' the Masters o' Hutcheon—Lords Hutcheon by rights. I've no brother now, nor other proper kin to take the name up.”

“Oh, but you are young, *m'sieu*,” said the Bailie, in his simplicity helping on the Master's purpose, “and you will marry a nice young lady—with what you say—a tocker.”

“'Deed, Bailie,” exclaimed the Master, “and that's just what I wish to do, tocher or no tocher; for, thank God! I have plenty, and think it's a pity that a good auld name should die out.”

“Certainly it is pity,” agreed the Bailie.

“I think it is, Bailie,” said the Master with a smile, “and that's what for I'm here—ye understand?”

“*Comment!* How, *m'sieu*?”

“Weel,” said the Master, “her and me understand one another. We have come together, and I think we'll make a fitting match o't.”

The Bailie cast his eyes this way and that in the to-and-fro of sudden inquiry.

“You mean *Aimée*, *m'sieu*?—my daughter? But ‘come together,’ *M'sieu le Maître*—what you mean, sir?”

“Hoot, man,” said the Master, in deliberate explanation. “To speak the language that, I suppose, is used at this kind o' season—though for myself I like it to be keepit for private use—I love her, and by a' tokens she loves me, and the fact is we're gey well pleased wi' one another.”

“You mean *Aimée*, *m'sieu*?—my daughter?” again inquired the Bailie.

“Ay, surely!” exclaimed the Master. “Wha other?”

“And you wish to marry her?”

"Surely!" exclaimed the Master again. "When a lad loves a lass, Bailie, isna that what he wants to do?"

The Bailie shrugged his shoulder to his ear and squeezed out a smile.

"Sometime, *m'sieu*," said he, while he shot a rapid glance at his son, a glance which the Master followed. "But you wish to marry you," continued the Bailie. "*Oui, oui*;" and he gently nodded his head as in close consideration, and stole a sharp look or two at the Master.

"Weel, now, Bailie," said the Master, after a pause, bringing eye and nose to bear upon him, "what do ye say?"

"*Oui, oui*," murmured the Bailie, still nodding. "You wish now to appear truly the *Maître d'Hutcheon*, and to make Aimée the *Maîtresse*, and to live you in proper condition like *grand seigneur*—*n'est ce pas*?"

"As to that, Bailie," said the Master, "I am for the present under the Queen's orders."

"The Queen's orders!" exclaimed the Bailie, with a voice of wonder and an eye of inquiry.

"Ay," said the Master, "but it's a secret, man." Father and son exchanged looks of interest and amazement. Could this be true in very deed? "I have Her Majesty's orders appointing me what to do, and her own exact words are 'secrecy and dispatch.'"

"*Ah, oui!*" exclaimed the Bailie, now all interest and respect. "*Sa Majesté!* A secret mission? *La haute politique!* *Oui, oui!* And it is far away and for a long time, *M'sieu le Maître*?"

"It's ower the sea," answered the Master, speaking as carefully as if he were stating a conundrum, "and it'll be for as long as it may be. I am no free to say more the now, Bailie," he added, for apart from the fact that "secrecy" had been enjoined by the Royal letter, he saw clearly that the Bailie could not approve of some details of his expedition, because it would mean, for one thing, the disorganisation of the wincey manufacture.

"Oh, it is very well; it is equal," said the Bailie airily. "We are good friend, *m'sieu*," he added with a dip of his head, "and I am pleased that you be my gender—what you

say, good-son, son-in-law ; but, *m'sieu*, it is able to put itself off. When you come back from the secret mission will be time soon enough to marry you and to sit you down truly the *Maître d'Hutcheon*."

"But, Bailie," said the Master, "it's a needcessity that my wife goes wi' me. Ye'll understand that fine when I tell you all about it. And she'll be well cared for and well provided."

"*Oui, oui!*" said the Bailie, looking uncertainly at his fingers. "Well, *m'sieu*, I will think—yes, I will think. We are good friend, and I am always please to oblige you."

"And I have thought, Bailie," said the Master, taking up George's case now that he imagined his own satisfactorily arranged, "that it would be a comely and pleasant thing to have the two weddings together;" and he glanced at George, as if for approval of his craft in thus introducing the matter.

"*Hein?*" cried the Bailie in a sharp note of surprise and impatience, while George turned deathly pale. "Two weddings? Two? What you mean, *m'sieu?*"

"I know what the Master means, father," said George.

He sat up desperate to face the situation. As many an eloquent preacher is before he enters the pulpit, and many a brave soldier on the eve of a battle, so was George before the Master's words compelled him to stand forth ; his nerves were drawn tight as the strings of a fiddle-bow—deadly tight as the bow-string of an Eastern executioner—and he would have given a life's ransom to be rapt away and delivered from the necessity of making his statement to his father. But now that he must face the situation he was self-possessed and eloquent as the preacher, alert and courageous as the soldier.

"*Quoi?*" demanded the Bailie, and his eyes seemed as if they could bore holes in his son. "You know! What you know?"

"I know," said George, "that the Master is thinking of me and Elsie M'Cree. He knows that we love one another, that we have loved one another a long time, and that I have been waiting to tell you about it."

"Elsie! You! Ah, *va-t'en!* You are mad! You are fool!" cried the Bailie, flinging out his hand, and fluttering it wildly at his son, while his face flamed with passion.

"I have waited, father," said George, "till I could bear it no longer—I have waited only because I did not wish to displease you, or anger you."

"It *do* displease me!" broke in the Bailie. "It *do* anger me!"

"Please listen to me, father," continued the young man earnestly. "I cannot express to you how much I love her. And you can see for yourself not only how beautiful she is, but how good and sweet-tempered she is, and how quickly she has got into lady-like ways;" and much more to the same effect, during the recital of which his father glared, not at him, but at the crested cockatoo, which, excited by the raised voices, muttered and swore, not loud but deep, till the enraged Bailie flung a pebble at him, upon which he squawked and dropped from his perch. "It has come to this with me, father," the son ended with, "I must marry Elsie or die. And now, father, I dutifully ask for your permission."

"*Non, non!—non, non!*" cried the Bailie, turning on him furiously. "I will not allow! *Comprends-tu?* I will not! *Non, non!—non, non!* That is my word! I say it to you ten! fifteen! fifty!—a hundred time!"

"Why, father?" asked the young man with tolerable coolness.

"Because—because I will not it permit! That is why! Marry! You! Pif! And love! What know you of love? It is of a calf! You are a boy, what have not been beat with tawse sufficient! And when you marry you, sir, I find you girl with tocker, with money! Elsie—Elsie is very well, but Elsie have not a shilling."

"You might as well, father," declared the young man, "speak of Venus not having a shilling! Venus, I believe, had scarcely a rag to her back, and Elsie is not so badly off as that."

"You speak, sir," said the Bailie, easily caught into controversy, "like a young jackass! You have learn something

at college, but me, I have learn something also, though I was not at college! And me, I know that Venus was not for marriage! She was *pour l'amour*! Marriage! Pif! You, you are young! You are calf! You have the tooth of milk! You have not sow what they say the wild corn, and you speak of marriage! And for the Elsie baggage——”

“Wisht, Bailie,” commanded the Master, laying his hand on the furious father’s arm. “Ye must not miscall the lassie in my hearing!” The Bailie glanced at his neighbour, and was subdued by the overbearing eye and nose; he rolled his head in angry impatience, but he held his tongue. “The lassie is a good lassie and a bonny, man—say to the contrar’ wha will,” continued the Master. “And she’s ilka bit as well born as your son, though she’s no so well educate, and has no so much hope o’ gear; but that’s no blame to her. Let’s be canny and reasonable, Bailie, and no give way to angry passion that ilk ane o’ us may repent o’. And now I’ll say this more, Bailie—I owe the M’Crees kindness, and to even your son and Elsie a wee bit, I’ll give the lassie five hunder pounds to her tocher. But I winna try to persuade ye ayant yourself, Bailie. Let’s say no more about it the now. Sleep on’t, Bailie; put it aneath your pillow, and lay your head on’t. And now I must be setting off hame, when I’ve found the laddie.”

He rose; all three rose, the Bailie’s face now looking dull and gloomy, and they marched forward into the depth of the garden to find the rest of the company.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### LOVE TRAVERSED.

It is a pity that the young are not taken more account of in the affairs of life. Even a mother will fail to consider that the joys and the sorrows, the pleasure and the

pain of her children may be as poignant as those of people of mature years; they do not last so long, but while they last they may be more acute than those of the full-grown. Now, it may appear preposterous, but it is nevertheless true, that the love affair of the Master, and by that token his further history, was more affected by the jealous passion of Hamish M'Cree, aged eight or thereabouts, than by anything else I can name. For Hamish was in love with the Master's sweetheart—desperately, romantically, divinely in love with the fairy princess who had kissed and caressed him, praised and petted him; he dreamed of her by night and mused on her by day, and he wondered with the extremest alternations of hope and fear whether she would be willing to wait for him, and whether, when he was sufficiently grown, she would come to him in Andaman at his invitation. What with his daily musings on the young lady (in addition to his continued attendance at school), his conversations with Steven in regard to the levying and training of the Native Contingent, and his visits to O'Rhea to hear more and still more about Andaman, he had been little in the company of the Master for a week or two, and had never gone with him on the expeditions to Freedom; and he, therefore, had not guessed he had a rival in the Master—did not guess until that Saturday afternoon.

When he was dismissed from the presence of the Bailie and the Master, into the depths of the garden, he speedily came upon his fairy princess and the attendant Elsie, who, having been familiar to his senses since ever he could remember, was altogether without merit or attraction. Both Aimée and Elsie were excited with the purpose for which they guessed the Master had come, and in their excitement they played upon the tender feelings of Hamish with the mischievous abandon which almost always marks such traffic of young women with little boys who are to their liking; I suppose because they have a serene and certain consciousness that little boys can effect no serious reprisals.

"Oh, ye're come, are ye?" was Elsie's greeting, while the fairy princess stooped and kissed him and admired his tartan array. "Now," continued his aunt, "we'll ha'e

naething to say till ye if ye dinna tell's what the Maister has come for."

"I dinna ken," was Hamish's careless answer.

"What said he to the Bailie?" asked Elsie, and Aimée enforced the question by repeating it in her own way.

"He said," answered Hamish, "that he wanted a private word; but I dinna ken what he meant by that."

"But we ken," said Elsie. "Aha, laddie! Dinna we, Aimée?"

"*Taisez-vous*, Elsie," said Aimée, blushing. While the blush suffused her she stooped again and embraced the boy, saying, "You are nice, bonny laddie in tartan clothes."

"Eh," exclaimed Elsie, "dinna tell him that! He thinks enough o' himsel'! He'll be saying neist that 'Whaur ha'e ye been a' the day?' was made up for him!"

Hamish looked at Elsie and made the vindictive resolution never to forgive her for speaking of him so in the hearing of the fairy princess; but the princess made him amends by saying:

"So grand a Highland laddie must have a sweetheart; come here among the gooseberries and tell me who is your little sweetheart." She led him among the ripe berries, and straightway began to pluck and eat, and invited him to do the same. "Do your little sweetheart like gooseberries?" she asked carelessly.

"Ay," said Hamish; and it is to be reckoned to his credit that, though so young, he perceived the humour of the situation. He smiled wickedly (if I may apply so mature a word to so young a practitioner) as he continued, "Fine that. She likes them as weel as ye do."

"Does she?" exclaimed Aimée. "And who is your sweetheart, then?"

"Ye are," he answered with simple boldness; but when he had said that she gazed on him in such astonishment that he hung his head and blushed.

"You are a droll boy!" she laughed; and humiliation hung heavy about him because she took his declaration with so little seriousness. "Elsie," she called, laughing still, "what you think?"



"Dinna tell her!" he pleaded hurriedly.

But she thought it was all fun, and, still laughing, she told Elsie what he had said.

"Eh, sirs!" exclaimed Elsie. "But ye'll be wanting a private word wi' the Bailie yoursel'—winna ye, Hamish?—when the Maister's through! But, guidstakes, Aimée! it's no fair for you to ha'e twa joes courting ye and spiering for ye!"

"Oh, you!" cried Aimée. "You have two joes yourself!"

Elsie blushed and then paled, and for an instant looked as if she would burst into tears.

"I didna think," said she in a low voice, "ye would joke about that."

Hamish looked upon them with deep consideration while they embraced and kissed each other. He had paid no attention to the cause of their sudden emotion; his consideration was given to his own case. He was not slow to guess that the Master was his rival for the affections of the fairy princess, but he wished to make sure. He timidly plucked the frock of his princess.

"Is the Maister courting you?" he asked.

"You are a droll boy," she laughed.

But Elsie made direct reply to his direct question.

"Of course the Maister is. Do you think naeboddy should gang courting but you?"

"The Maister's gey auld," he objected.

So they continued to amuse themselves with him and his green passion, while he remained serious as an owl. Elsie declared that rivals in love affairs frequently settled their rivalry by fighting; he observed (with a remote relevance of which doubtless he himself was aware) that he could run faster than any boy he knew; and Aimée asked, if she waited for him, how many years would he keep her waiting; to which he had no reply ready. And thus they went on till the appearance of the Master and the Bailie.

Hamish was confirmed in all he had been told by the Master's attention to Aimée; so that when he was led away he was in a bursting condition of resentment and jealousy.

But he said no word to the Master. As soon as he could leave Hutcheon's company he ran off to relieve his full heart on O'Rhea, with no thought of vindictiveness, but merely because O'Rhea was always sympathetic, and because (it was patent to the boy) he was cleverer than any other to whom he could talk.

O'Rhea lay on a sunny patch of grass, wallowing in the enjoyment of the heat. His great hairy arms and neck were bare, for he was clothed only in under-vest and trousers; he wore the Will Atkins handkerchief about his head, and he smoked a black pipe, and altogether looked as piratical as could be desired. He received the boy with somnolent kindness, but he was slack in his attention to what he had to say, until he heard the following question put:

"Dinna ye think, F. O., that the Maister's ower auld to be Miss Aimée's man?"

Then he sat up as alert as if he had been a pirate and had heard the cry of "A sail on the weather-bow!"

"What's that you say, boy?" he barked in his harshest tone.

The boy made his meaning evident, and a sharp question or two set it forth clear and threatening as a portent. And then Hamish stood aghast and terrified. For O'Rhea beat his fist in his palm, and bellowed in a frothy passion of revolt and objurgation. Never had Hamish heard anyone called such names of sanguinary folly, stupidity, and idiocy as O'Rhea then called the Master. The boy burst into tears, and declared he would never come to tell him anything again; and the man's passion sank as suddenly as it had arisen. He drew Hamish to him, and wiped his eyes, and hugged him. (On the whole, Hamish thought he did not like the hugs of men.)

"Don't you cry, sonny," said O'Rhea, "I'll make this all right. I'll choke Hutcheon—the Master—off; it'll come all right. And you shall have your sweetheart to yourself. Oh, my commas and full stops!" he suddenly cried. "For a school-boy that has not yet seen the *pons asinorum* you're a rare Don Juan! But I suppose it was bred in the blood and bones of ye, and is bound to come out early. You're

the son of your father, eh, sonny ?” And he pinched the boy’s ear, and again hugged him. “But to think that you should be just the one to put the Master’s nose out of joint !” And he sniggered and tee-hee’d, and rolled his head and cried, “Oh, dear ! oh, dear !” Then noting Hamish’s anxious look at the hint that he was in some way damaging the Master, the man of breeze and battle threw his hairy arm about the boy’s neck, drew him to a seat close at hand, and set him between his knees. “Look here, sonny,” said he, striving to allay the erect crop on the boy’s head. “You and me are going to sail together a mighty long voyage. You’re a jolly boy, a clever boy, the kind of boy I like. I like you as much as if you were my own son. I believe you’re just like what I was when I was your age. Do you like me ?” he asked suddenly, as if he doubted it.

“Ay,” answered Hamish with reserve, “I like ye fine.”

“Do ye like me better than the Master ?”

Hamish hesitated and then made answer :

“I like the Maister fine, too.”

O’Rhea laughed.

“Well, sonny,” said he, “I’m going to be better to you than the Master. I’ll manage that he sha’n’t have your sweetheart. Stick to me, and you shall have your lass and your glass when our topsails are hoisted and we’re away to sea ; and

“‘ Wi’ your sword and your dirk and your little jacket blue,  
You shall walk the quarter-deck as your daddie used to do !’”

“But my jacket isna blue,” objected Hamish.

“It will be, sonny, it will be ; sky-blue, with silver buttons ; and we shall have ingots and doubloons, and you shall have cocoanuts galore, in the islands of coral. But, sonny,” he added, suddenly turning on the boy’s face a sharp side-long look, “there mustn’t be a word of this to the Master—not a word, mind. For, d’ye see ? if you tell Hutcheon what you’ve told me he’ll go straight away and marry your sweetheart ; and if he marries her, he’ll go and live in a house like other married folk, and beget sons and daughters,” he added reflectively, resuming immediately his ex-

position of probabilities to the boy, "and there will be no more of Andaman, no sailing over the seas to lovely islands, no Native Contingents, no cocoanuts, sonny, no nothing!"

That truly was O'Rhea's belief, and he was resolved in his masterful way to put a stop to the chance of the Master's marriage. With that purpose he sought an interview next day with the Bailie. With the bracing touch of anxiety on his nerves (for he was aware how difficult it would be to gain his point without telling more than prudence allowed of the projected expedition to Andaman), he stood on a chair set against the wall and looked over into the garden of Corbie Ha'. It was the afternoon of Sunday, and he had observed, since the warm weather had begun, that then it was the custom of the Bailie, as of Hamlet's father, to sleep within his orchard, in an arbour screened from draughts. When O'Rhea looked over the Bailie had not yet appeared, and he waited with his arms spread on the mossy top of the old wall and with his chin in his hands. Presently the Bailie sauntered into view, finishing his cigar, and when he came near enough O'Rhea spoke.

"This is a fine, quiet afternoon, Bailie," he said in a tone of Sabbatarian repose.

"Ah," cried the Bailie, looking up, "*c'est mon Mira-beau.*"

"You will excuse me, Bailie, for setting my big head up here in this unceremonious fashion; but when the heart is sore and sad, Bailie, ceremony goes to the wall."

"Ah, ah, as you do, *hein*?—ha, ha!"

"That's very neatly said, Bailie, very neat, indeed!" exclaimed the flatterer.

"Come over—will you not?—and let us have chat."

"No, thank you, Bailie. You want your nap, and I won't interfere with it. I know your habit, you see. No; I have been just taking what may be a last look at this lovely, peaceful, shady garden of yours."

His manner of address was carefully calculated from what he knew of the Bailie; it was artfully compounded of deference, familiarity, and a demand for sympathy.

"Yes," said the Bailie, swelling himself and his pockets

out as he cast a glance round, "it is nice place. But," wheeling sharply back into position, "why 'last look' ? Hein ?"

"Because, Bailie," said O'Rhea, in a tone of infinite regret, "I am like the Wandering Jew—*Le Juif Errant*—that your Sue has written about. I must keep moving. I am going away. I think the curse must be on me. I have always been a rover, always engaged in desperate—if beneficent—enterprises. I am under orders again—this time for the most desperate and dangerous enterprise I have ever joined. We may never return from it—never again! never again!" And he desperately planted his chin in his hands. "And so, you see," he added, as with an attempt at gaiety, "I am a little sad."

"Ah, *c'est ça!*" exclaimed the Bailie, and threw away his cigar among the bushes.

O'Rhea noted that the Bailie was becoming interested, suspicious, and alarmed, and he continued to provoke these feelings.

"Yes, that's it. We go away to serve our country and our people, and if there is an end of us—well, then there is the satisfaction beforehand of knowing we shall have done our duty. But I am sad all the same. I have a presentiment—— But why should I bother you with all this ?"

"I am your obliged, on the contraire, M'sieu Mirabeau," said the Bailie with resolution. "And now you have tell me so much, tell me who is 'we' ?"

"Did I say 'we,' Bailie ? I must have forgotten myself."

"No, no, no. You say 'we'—and shall I say who 'we' is ? 'We,' *m'sieu*, is you and your friend the Master d'Hutcheon. He tell me himself!"

"Oh, well," said O'Rhea, with apparent relief, "if he told you himself then there's no harm in owning it."

"And now, between us, tell me what is this secret mission of the Queen ? Where goes it ? If it is *la haute politique*, why is it so dangerous ?"

"Oh, excuse me, *M'sieu le Bailli*," exclaimed O'Rhea in well-feigned alarm ; "if the Master has not told you, certainly I must not ! It is secret, it is dangerous. That is

enough. And I must not keep you from your nap, Bailie; I hope you will enjoy it;" and he made as if to descend from his perch.

"*Arrêtez-vous, m'sieu!*" cried the Bailie. "Stop! It is likely I nap me—is it not?—after you say these things! Now I tell you something, and then perhaps you tell me what is this secret mission, because you will see it is of my business. Yesterday the Master come to me and desire to marry my daughter all of a blow—all of a blow, *entendez-vous!*"

"No, really?" said O'Rhea, raising his head as in a shock of amazement.

"*Vraiment! Vraiment!*" cried the Bailie, smiting the one hand in the other. "And I wish for to know why! Here, *you* say, is enterprise desperate and dangerous, and *he* say it is of necessity to take wife with him! And there is more! He have just spoke to me again, and I have promise he will marry before he go! Now, wives is not necessary to men what go for enterprises desperate and dangerous! Why, then, what is the meaning?"

"Well, Bailie," said O'Rhea slowly, as if with a guard on his tongue, "it is no business of mine to explain the Master's conduct; but I'll give my opinion as a friend. When a man's in love, whatever he wishes seems to him a necessity. You must have observed that, Bailie. And the Master doesn't think this enterprise as dangerous as I do; but I have been there before, and he hasn't, and I have said to him, as I say to you, it will be more dangerous than he can think—yes, and more costly," he added, with a grim allusiveness which was lost, of course, on the Bailie, "more costly than he can guess."

"Come, then, come," said the Bailie persuasively, "what is this enterprise?"

"It would be more than my neck is worth, Bailie, to tell you. You don't know, perhaps, what a terrible determined devil of a fellow the Master can be. He may seem to you always *tête montée*, or nose in the air; but he is not to be turned aside, and when he is angry he burns at a white heat. Did you ever hear what he did to Hew Tamson because he

believed the fellow had betrayed him?" The Bailie nodded and gnawed his thumb. "Well, so would he do to the man that would tell you what you have asked." He turned again as if to descend from his station, and then of a sudden he leaned over the wall as in pity of the Bailie's obvious uncertainty, and said hurriedly, "You've been a good friend to me, Bailie, and I'll permit myself one word before I bid you good-day: If I were you, and had your daughter, I would chew all temper and swallow it; not a syllable would I utter to the Master, but I would make sure that he should not see my daughter again until he be back from this enterprise. Good-afternoon, Bailie."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### A SYMPOSIUM.

"Now," said O'Rhea to himself when he had dropped on his own side of the wall, "if Frenchy doesn't pack that little limmer of his off in the morning light I'm a Dutchman!"

His expectation was completely fulfilled, for on looking forth from his little garden gate next morning early, he saw the Bailie and his daughter and Elsie M'Crea driven away in a cab with luggage. The Bailie waved his hand, and when the cab had passed, O'Rhea stepped out and inquired of his friend Jaques, who lingered at the gate, where the Bailie was gone. Jaques answered that *M'sieu le Bailli* had gone to Edinburgh on business, and taken his daughter with him; and O'Rhea returned to his cottage rubbing his hands in satisfaction.

An hour later he came out arrayed in his sailor rig to conduct the Master into the town; a desirable vessel—a brigantine—had at length been found for sale, and that day had been set down for its inspection by the Master and for negotiation of its purchase. The business was long drawn

out, and it was not till the afternoon that the Master could get home to Ilkastane, leaving O'Rhea still in the town.

He hasted immediately to the old tryst in Freedom, but neither Aimée nor Elsie was to be seen. He returned to Corbie Ha' to inquire for his sweetheart, and Jaques astonished him with the information that Miss Lepine was gone with her father to Edinburgh, and that Miss M'Crea had also gone with them. Had no word been left for him ? he asked. No word, *M'sieu*, said the melancholy Jaques; *M'sieu le Bailli* had made up his mind all of a blow, but that was the mode of *M'sieu le Bailli*. The Master went to his own abode, and presently sought an interview with Elsie's mother; but she could tell him only that Elsie had run in for an instant that morning to say that the Bailie had suddenly announced a journey to Edinburgh, and that she seemed pleased enough at the prospect.

Some time later, towards dusk, the Master, bewildered in heart and mind, drove himself forth again to hear what George Lepine might have to say; and of that came something of consequence. He found the young man seated alone in the garden; he had dined, and was smoking his after-dinner cigar.

"I am very glad you have come, Mr. Hutcheon," said he. "I was thinking that presently I would find out your house in the loan and have a talk with you."

"It's no much of a house I have left to me in Ilkastane," said the Master, "but such as it is I'd like fine to see you there. . . . And so," he added, approaching the matter that was troubling him, "ye are all your lone."

"Yes," answered George, and looked hard into the depths of the garden, "I am all alone."

"Except," added the Master, "for your sister's cat and parrot," which were there before them.

"Yes," said George, "except for them."

He still looked hard into the depth of the garden. The Master guessed there was trouble swelling in him also, and he held his peace and waited. In the garden-depth a black-bird bugled, and a mavis poured his rich, sensuous song;



Cocky muttered sleepily in his beak, and the cat leaped lightly after little frogs that hopped out of the long grass and sat panting and staring on the gravel; the roses hung as if fainting in their own sweetness, the solemn trees appeared to be drowsily listening to far-off sounds of children's play in the village, and the light smoke rose straight into the warm still air. All things suggested the repose of expanded life.

"I can't stand this," said George. "Mr. Hutcheon, will you join me in a bottle of burgundy?" The Master did not object on that particular occasion to refresh himself with something other than his own thoughts and imaginations, and the young man went in with alacrity and fetched a bottle of wine of the ancient duchy. "Try that, sir," said George. "It's liquid life and sunshine; it has grown to what it is with myself; my father laid it down when I was born, and first opened it when I was one-and-twenty."

The Master tasted it, said it seemed to him "a thought wersh after usquebagh," but admitted he had in his life had little opportunity of judging of such things.

"It would be capital stuff," said the young man, after taking off a glass, "to make the wild corn grow, or the wild oatmeal, that you have heard my father complain I haven't sown."

"I think myself," said the Master, "you're none the worse for not having sown them. Whiles ye're about it, it's just as well and canny to sow a crop ye winna think shame to put your sickle into."

"My father is driving me mad!" exclaimed George. "I can't stand it! I shall have to do something desperate! . . . You know," he said, turning full to the Master, "that he has taken Aimée and Elsie off to Edinburgh?"

"I have heard he has," said Hutcheon.

"But what for?" demanded George, and still he drank the wine. "Has that occurred to you?"

"No," answered the Master. "What for?"

And his heart beat tumultuously, for he thought the reason must concern him.

"He has taken them off just to spite me, because with

Aimée not here there's no excuse for Elsie staying ; and he has taken Elsie with Aimée because he wanted to get her out of my way and to drive me mad with knowing he's gone with them."

The Master leapt at once to the young man's point of view, but he declared :

"I cannot see it with your een. No, man, I cannot think your father means that altogether."

"I understand my father, Mr. Hutcheon," said the young man with emphasis, "and I am sure of it. Besides, we had some words last night after you left. He was furious that I spoke again of marrying Elsie, and wanted to know why I could not be content at my age to sow my 'wild corn' like other young men. He'll drive me to drink or something worse—as sure as death he will !" and again he filled his glass and drank.

The Master thought that the young man was taking off more than his share of the bottle, and he helped himself. He put aside his own anxiety and doubt, and considered the distress and doubt of the other. To all romantic natures, and especially to one in love, the spectacle of a man who is by way of making a fool of himself on account of a woman is one to stir the bowels of compassion.

"Man," said the Master, "dinna speak like that—there's no occasion. I like ye for that ye're leal and true to a lassie that a lad in your position might have ta'en a mean advantage o'; and I like ye for yourself, man. Now, I'm one of them that thinks a man should do all for love, short of forswearing his God and his manhood, and I'm going to make a propose to you that I would make to no other man, and to you only because ye're in a pass o' desperation. In an ordinar' case of the kind I would say, 'Mind what your father says, my lad ; dinna conter him ; bide your time ;' but in your case, wi' your father inclined to the lassie in a way unbecoming his years, I say, 'Follow the light o' your own een and o' your own conscience ; marry your lass—she's a bonny lass, and, I believe, a canny and a canty one—and come awa' wi' me to the Promised Land !' Man, I tell it ye in a secret. I have a grand expedition on hand, whilk to

my thinking is just like leading the Lord's folk out of the House o' Bondage!"

The Master paused and finished his glass, and George filled it and his own again and waited in silence, but with lively attention; and the life and sunshine, the strength of the earth and the essence of light, which had been imprisoned for more than one-and-twenty years, coursed through their veins and predisposed them both to the rosiest view of the vision of Exodus, not through a yawning sea with terror and toil, but over a sunlit, summer ocean with confidence and joy. The Master set forth his plan, relating fully how his purpose and its fulfilment had come to him, omitting mention of the Queen's letter, but telling how the ship was already found—bought that very day—and how crew and passengers were being prepared.

"And that," said George, "is the secret mission you mentioned to my father?"

"That's just it," answered the Master. "I wrote to Her Majesty for leave to go, and she most graciously granted it. 'Strict secrecy and dispatch' was her word, and I'm hoping we'll be up and off in a week or two. And my propose to ye is that ye marry Elsie and come too."

*A week or two!* The nearness of so complete a change in his existence made the young man pause, and made him critical. Had the day of Exodus been vaguely in the future, he would have looked forward to it through clouds of enthusiasm, for he was a romantic young man who dreamed dreams and saw visions; he read Tennyson, and, like the ranter of *Locksley Hall*, he delighted in all the wonders that would be, and he read Carlyle and admired "the Hero," and was inclined to doubt and despise the mass from which he sprang. It was doubtless a noble and heroical undertaking which the Master had set forth, but ought it not to be considered and weighed a little longer?

"Let us have another bottle," said he, "and talk about it. Shall we?"

"Hoot, ay," answered the Master. "A bottle more or less makes no differ, for though it has an agreeable twang it doesna take the head like the usquebagh."

So they settled down to the second bottle, and the Master began to be so agreeably and insidiously affected by the old burgundy that, without his being aware of it, his views were heightened and his tongue was inspired with new eloquence and emphasis. The young man responded in kind, and the blackbird seemed to utter a more cheerful note, and the mavis to trill with more flowing sympathy in the gathering gloom. It grew dark, but still the talk went on. George went in to bring a lamp, just that "they might see to drink," and the talk was resumed with unabated gusto. For they were becoming intoxicated, not more with wine than with that headiness of speech which affects Scotsmen when they discuss questions of conduct or abstruse matters of religion, love, or politics.

And this was the manner in which their talk opened.

George Lepine shook his head in heavy doubt, and declared that benevolent Utopias and all-loving communities had been tried before and had failed; and for his part—and he shook his head again—he did not believe in the worth or the gratitude of the very poor. When people were miserably poor it was commonly because they deserved to be so.

"Ah," said the Master, lightly tapping the table and stroking it with his fingers as if it were a living thing. His heart was so full of great, warm, inspired thoughts struggling for utterance that he could for the moment say nothing but "Ah, sirs!" But the young man had uttered what was to the Master a damnable heresy, and he must be rebuked and instructed. "I'm sorry to hear ye speak like that, man," said he, "for that's aye the clack o' the oppressor. But ye speak in ignorance;" and he burst into a defence of his poor—God's chosen—Christ's own people. He had known the very poor of Ilkastane all his days, and he declared before heaven that their desires and endeavours were most honest and manly—"men and women and a'." They were helpful with each other, patient in misfortune, content with the smallest crumb of comfort; he had never *lent* a poor man a shilling but it had been repaid him, for all that the man might be living on the starvation edge of life.

And if qualities like these were not virtues, he would like to know what virtues were.

Yes, yes, George admitted these were admirable virtues in the population of any country, and he believed many of his poor neighbours were adorned with them; but he had found that most of them—well, they would take as much as they could get for as little as they could do. "Take up your wine, Mr. Hutcheon," said he, "you are letting me drink it all."

The Master ignored the request, and straightened himself for a higher pitch of speech. If a man contemplated only mean desires and ends, everybody he looked at would naturally seem to be moved by as mean motives as himself. But—(and he raised his clenched fist. George saw it ready to come down like a hammer. Would it not make the glasses dance? It came down, but when it touched the table its force would not have bruised a fly)—but by what right do we keep hold of all the love and joy and other fine things of life that we can lay hold of, and then complain of these when they take the smallest easement of their burden of poverty? If *we* take as much as we can get for as little as we can do—and do we not?—how can we expect the poor folk who look on not to do the same? It is a sad thing in life that we see only what we want to see; and it is a damnable thing that we commonly want to see only our own affairs.

"By no right at all," George answered readily enough, "except that right which has been from the beginning—the right of might."

"But have not God and Religion," the Master demanded, "set up a better and truer law for men?"

"Doubtless," said George, "but it is like Religion itself—oftener heard of than seen at work. The law of Nature," he declared, "was the survival of the strongest and fittest; and the fittest man to carry on prosperously the game of life was always—had been in all ages—the selfish man, so that as the world grew older it grew more and more selfish."

The "Survival of the Fittest" was a doctrine the Master

had not heard of before, but it scarcely gave him pause in his triumphant vindication of his folk. He surmounted it thus :

"Survival here, survival there," said he. "The world ye speak o' is just the Devil's world o' shops and machines, mills and engines, and that will be to the fore only as long as the Almighty thinks it should be." And then he went on in his former vein : It was a true word as ever was written that the destruction of the poor is their poverty ; but it seemed to him that the deadliness, the sting of poverty, might be made very much less by inoculating everybody with a touch of it, as is done for the small-pox.

"That's not at all a bad idea," exclaimed the young man gaily.

"Ay," said the Master, "it's the best notion I know."

And with the fingers of one hand in the palm of the other he proceeded to demonstrate that if people were taught, by precept and example, that the best things, the most desirable things, are not things to eat and to drink (he glanced at the wine bottle) and wherewithal to be clothed (he laid his fingers on the sleeve of the young man's fine coat)—why, it would make a wonderful "differ to everybody," and poverty would be no worse than a snell wind or a pinch of frost.

But the worst had been that the poor had been counselled and guided ("I'm thinking," said he, "in particular of our Chartists") by men who set them off routing and roaring "like bairns" for "some penny whistle or tee-totum or other trash." "Poor folk, however," he continued, "are aye like bairns and need to be guided, and the person to guide should be like a father in authority ; and that's what for," said he with simple dignity, "I'm taking the lead in this business."

The young man looked at the master in silent admiration. He had become transfigured before his eyes into a Carlylean Hero. He took up the bottle ; it was empty ; and he proposed, since the night was fine and sleep not to be thought of, that they should take a walk and continue their colloque.

The Master assented, and they set out, talking still with unabated zest. They walked by Freedom and the dark wood of Maiden Craig, but they scarce knew where they went. They trod on air, and their hearts burned within them by the way, and they talked of all great things in heaven and earth—foolishly it may be, but with continued intoxicating effect. Long before their talk was done George Lepine was the humble admirer and disciple of the Master, and fully pledged to go to Andaman.

Above them the Great Bear had twisted round the Polar Star, but still they talked—talked of the land of pure delight to which they would soon set sail. They returned to Ilkastane, and walked down the loan between the sleeping houses sweltering in poverty and heat; they walked past Hutcheon's close and along the Burnside to the gate of Corbie Ha'. But even yet they had much to say to each other, and George Lepine walked back with the Master into Ilkastane, and then, for company's sake, the Master walked back with him; and thus they continued to swing to and fro, still talking. They heard the night-watchman cry, "Twa chappet, and a fi-ne morning!"—heard it as in a dream. Soon the crow of distant cocks sounded sleepy and faint, and the cool, fresh dawn crept up the sky. On the turn of Burnside, where it lay open to the east, they stopped.

"Look!" said the Master. "Like the morning light the day o' hope comes over the sea, like saft music—ay, and like an army wi' banners—and poor weary folk are wakening and rising up and hearkening what it maun mean! They mayna well ken what, but it goes to their hearts and fills them wi' joy! Ay, man, it's coming on like the bonny daylight after the dark pit-mirk!"

Long live Love! Long live Hope! Long live Illusion! They are the only real and divine things in a world of commonplace shams!—the only spiritual and buoyant things in a life soaked and clogged with the sordid cares of money and the dull deceitfulness of respectability. But the effect of Hutcheon's words was at once dashed by the sound of a cough, like the clearing of the throat of a foundry bellows.

They were close to O'Rhea's cottage. Feeling almost as if they had been interrupted in their devotions, they turned and saw O'Rhea's great shaven face looking out of the upper window, and looming through the growing light like a sinister portent.

"Is that you, Fergus?" said the Master politely.

"Ay, it's me," answered Fergus.

"Well," said the Master, grasping George's hand in farewell, "I maun haud away home."

"You've been doing that for a long time, haven't you?" said O'Rhea.

"Ay, Fergus, whiles," said the Master, and walked off to the loan.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### ON TO THE RAPIDS.

THE events of the next week or two passed like the phantasmagoria of a dream. The necessary preparations for the voyage were urged and flogged forward by O'Rhea with unceasing vigilance and consuming energy; and the Master took part in them with an absence of mind which made him lag far behind his lieutenant, and with a preoccupation that left him ignorant of much that was done. For instance, he knew that arms were bought—a few muskets and cutlasses for purposes of defence on a long voyage, and for protection on landing—but it escaped him that arms were bought again and again, under various disguises, till a complete arsenal was got together. Moreover, the Master, besides being preoccupied with thoughts and fancies concerning the bright little lady—the "bonnie lammie"—who was away in distant Edinburgh, was occupied with an interest peculiar to himself. For the sake of decency and order he was resolved that the unmarried men who had joined the expedition—even the sailors who were to navigate the ship—



should take unto themselves wives; and since it was not easy for every man thus to provide himself or to make his choice, even in such promising and jubilant circumstances, the Master took up the task of assortment.

For that and other reasons, but for that reason especially, it was inevitable that the excitement of the "flitting" should increase and widen. The folk were of that dour and mulish sort who are hard to move, but who, being moved, take their head. The memory of the extraordinary ecstasy which then seized the folk and spread like an epidemic still lingers in Ilkastane and in the neighbouring Inverdoon. It was like nothing so much as like the Revival of Religion which visited the same communities some few years later; and yet it was more than that. It was more general and more ebullient, more lightsome and humane, for it was charged only with hope. There was no relish of damnation in it.

*Andaman* was a word to conjure with. It filled the air; it breathed warm hope into the charnel-smelling weaving-shops; it palpitated in the choking atmosphere of the mills. *Andaman*, with its idle sunshine and soft delights, its rest and its plenty, was in the fancies of the day and the dreams of the night. It nerved the thin arm of the hungry weaver, and it moved the wife at her winding-wheel to song. It made the pirns snarl and the shuttles dash wildly through the warp; and it produced such flaws and fines as had never before been known in Bailie Lippen's receiving-room.

"What the de'il's the meaning o' this?" the exasperated Tamson would cry on taking-in day. "Are ye a' gane daft? There's no a piece worth tippence the yard!"

The weavers listened to him with the calm, seraphic gaze of Christian martyrs. The troubling of Tamson soon would cease, and there would be an end of woven "pieces" and of shuttles and lays. In that mood they strove at their looms morning, noon, and night to finish their webs anyhow and by any means.

"I dinna want another wab," was the word of each one when he took in his last piece.

"No want another wab?" was the exclamation of the astonished Tamson. "Sorra tak' ye! how are ye gaun to get bit and sup?"

And the smiling answer of one after another was, "We're gaun awa'."

Swiftly came this general cessation from work—the lads and lasses even left the mills; and then shuttles and caulms, pirns and winding-wheels, and anon necessary wash-tubs and pots and pans were sold to neighbours, or to a broker from the town. "We ha'e nae use for them now. We're gaun awa'." Upon that it seemed as if the whole population of Ilkastane were continually in their Sabbath clothes. They bought themselves gay neckerchiefs, and caps, and shoes, and lavishly supplied the children with sweets. They were completely idle, and completely at ease; they laughed and talked, and fell into pleasing reveries with their eyes lifted and fixed, as it were, far over the sun-lit ocean. There was open love-making without end. Lads and lasses strolled about in groups with their arms about each other's necks, sucking sweets (which they would exchange with one another in the midst of the process) and singing the love-songs of Robbie Burns; and sometimes strings of them would thus walk to the burn and pools of Freedom, or to the more distant sea, to bathe, as if to have an actual foretaste of one of the peculiar pleasures of the future. And the remarkable thing in all this was that there was much less drinking than hitherto. They seemed often filled "with new wine," but it was with the wine of happiness and hope. Tears often sprang in their eyes and flowed, but they dried and left no trace of scalding or of grief, for they were without bitterness. They were the mere superfluous distillation of ecstasy.

And withal they waited for the hour of their deliverance with serene patience for the most part. Such a man as the consumptive might occasionally exclaim to his neighbour:

"Eh, man, I'm thinking lang for the ship to sail! My hoast rives me to bits in the night-time, and tak's a' the fousion out o' me."

But the neighbour would answer by sympathetically

grasping the consumptive's damp hand and recommending him to "cheer up," or "hold on," for "we'll be awa' in the flisk o' a shuttle!"

There was one person who was disturbed and alarmed by this exalted condition of the folk, and that was O'Rhea; and he appealed to the Master, who appeared to him to aid and abet it.

"I don't like it, Hutcheon," he said. "They're all just as if they were drunk. There'll be a reaction presently, just like next day's headache and low spirits, and if anything should go wrong then—the Lord help us!"

"I ha'e no doubt He will, Fergus," said the Master. "But what should go wrong?"

"A dozen things may happen to keep us from sailing away—sailing away when we want to, I mean. 'Strewth, sir! Don't you see that there's one danger at least already lying all round us? The thing's too much talked about, and the behaviour of the folk is queer enough to be spoken of all over Inverdoon!"

"Weel, what would ye do?" asked the Master, with a careless eye on his lieutenant.

"Man alive!" exclaimed O'Rhea. "You have authority over them. Can't you keep them from parading about in their best toggery and behaving as if they were drunk?"

"Man, Fergus," said the Master, "I havena the heart to do it! The poor things are just like bairns let out o' school, and am I to be the dominie with the tawse to drive them in again? No, man, the folk are behaving wonderful well, in my opinion; only push on and get the ship ready, and we'll slip out o' this like a peeled ingan."

"Push on! I've been pushing on, Hutcheon, till I am dead beat!—dead beat!" and he buried his face with effect in his great hairy hands.

"Do I no ken that, man?" said the Master. "Come, take off a drop o' this usquebagh to put spunk into ye. Do I no ken how ye work at it? Ye're worth a' the rest o' us put together. But we must get through with it, Fergus, man; and then, hey for *Andaman*!"

"All right, Hutcheon. The shipwrights and the rest of them shall work double shifts; but it'll come expensive."

"Never mind the expense, let them push on; and I'll be down and help ye all I can."

But the presence of the Master during the preparation of the ship and the getting in of stores was what O'Rhea least of all desired.

"No, no, sir," said he. "There's plenty for you to look after here. Leave the ship to me. I understand it, being a kind of old tarry-breeks myself."

O'Rhea well knew how to appeal to the Master's trust and generosity, and he went out from his presence in more complete command of the enterprise than ever—a result which was aided by the Master's abandonment to the prevailing ecstasy, and to an ecstasy of his own as well.

Andaman and Aimée again interplayed in all his attention, all his thought and imagination, like the two sides of a web when a weaver sits at his loom; for the doubt and anxiety which had seized him, on hearing of the Bailie's sudden excursion to Edinburgh, had disappeared in the delight of receiving one letter, and another, and another from the little lady herself—letters filled with treasures of tenderness, irresponsibility, and mischief.

Yes, Hutcheon had received two letters, and a third letter, from the bright humming-bird, the fairy little lady. With what delight he had fingered the first! It had come unasked, like the best gifts of Heaven! How he wondered, and lovingly pored over the dainty paper and the delicate writing! How he devoured every phrase and word—"My dear Master"—and hurried with glee through every detail of her little chronicle! The second was like the first; but the third made him pull his beard and think—especially these passages:

"Yesterday papa took us for a drive in a carriage to the house of a friend in the country. It was very beautiful, and I leaned back my head and shut my eyes and forgot where I was. My heart fled away back over the land and the water to Freedom, and I thought of you, *mon ami*, and of

your wishing to marry me and take me away over the sea. It seems very strange. I do not understand it. I feel like a little bird trying to get into a room through the glass of a window. I cannot. But I must tell you about a young gentleman that I have met. He was at college with my brother George; and we talked about my brother and that he hates the mill. He is very nice—oh, very nice indeed. Well, to-night I have been to a dance and I have met him again; and again he was very nice and gracious. I liked him, and we danced, danced till I was very tired. Oh, dear me! I have written this when I come home. I am so very sleepy. Good-night, dear friend. *Au revoir!*”

The Master was rendered uneasy by that letter. Something began to gnaw at his heart. And yet, why should not this winsome wee thing be happy in her own way?—and dance with elegant and handsome young friends of her brother?—and dance again?—and forget for a time him and Andaman, and all that he and Andaman meant for her? Why not? But that same evening there came another missive from the fair young lady. It contained only four flowing lines, but they burned his eyes as if they exhaled a corrosive acid:

“Please do not write to me again. And I must not write. Papa is very angry. But do not fear, *mon ami*.”

He stood erect and looked through the skylight at the blue overhead. The sunshine, he knew, was still warm and bright without, but in the garret around him it seemed very dark and chill. Yes, there were the words before him, written in those clear, delicate characters by that dear, soft little hand! Ah, cruel, soft hand! But what did the words imply? Merely the Bailie’s whim of command?—or—— Oh, no! That thought was too deadly to be admitted! It would sting like an adder and shoot poison and death through heart and brain! But——

“We must push on!—push on!” he said, gathering himself together to receive one or two visitors whom he heard

on the stairs, and who had come by appointment to carry out the final arrangements for several weddings on the morrow.

The most notable of the couples to be joined in matrimony was the one-eyed Commander of the Andaman Native Contingent and the long-wooded daughter of Kirsty Kyle. Kirsty contributed to the couple a "weary pund or twa" of tocher, and the Master contributed the wedding-feast, in which all the "Andamaners" were to share. Already the blue silk banner of the weaver Chartists (which the Master had religiously preserved) hung across the loan, swinging its silver tassels and fringes and its mysterious lettering over the heads of a young excited generation that scarcely understood these things. There was prepared, also, for the night, the materials of a bonfire in the middle of the square of Hutcheon's Close, to burn in the merest luxury of rejoicing; and the martial Steven had himself laid in a supply of squibs and crackers and two brass "hand cannon" to rend the air with astonishment and joy at the proper moment; "for," as he said to Hamish in a burst of confidence, "denmit, sir, the bride o' the chief o' the Native Contingent maun ha'e a salute!"

The night was hot, and for Hutcheon the hours passed wearily, with fierce oppression of mind and body, in the choking heat under his garret tiles, which had been baking all day in the sun. Oh, for the sweet, calm joy of possession, and a cooling breeze on the crisp, blue sea!

The morning came early, with a glowing sun in a brazen sky, and the maddening chatter of sparrows, and the Master tossing on his bed imagined how pleasant it must be at that hour in Freedom, with its wet green grass, its laverocks shooting, soaring aloft and pouring down their stream of song like a benediction on the earth, and its clear, cold, wimpling burn, in which one might bathe and be refreshed. He dressed quietly and quickly and set out. There was no one stirring in the close or in the loan. But something tempted him to raise his eyes to the roof of M'Cree's house, and there he saw what sent the blood in a gush to his heart. The skylight was open, and Kitty M'Cree leaned out with

smiling, muttering lips and with gaze aloft as if she were looking for the coming of the Lord in the air. The Master's keen eye soon corrected that impression and told him that she was truly contemplating the Chartist banner, which had not been seen in public since the days when Kitty, vain and sane, had followed it in the company of the Chartist leaders. Kitty now looked from her window, muttering, smiling, and witless; and where were they?—George, his brother? O'Rhea? M'Cree? and the rest?

Kitty did not see him, and he passed on in the sadness of reminiscence. Out on the road to Freedom he was cheered by meeting the early milk and market carts bumping and clanking into town, accompanied by strapping carters and self-possessed colliers. Freedom and its burn soothed and refreshed him; they washed away all the doubts and dark imaginations of the night as if they had never been. ("Do not fear, *mon ami!*" Of course, why should he fear? It was natural that he and Andaman should seem strange to the little lady; but he was sure he could trust her, and all would be well when she returned and he again met her face to face.) He hummed "Ca' the yowes to the knowes!" and returned to eat his breakfast of porridge with an appetite, and to array himself for the ceremonies and festivities of the day.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### CRISIS.

THE loan was very gay. For, besides the blue silk banner there were hung across it many pieces of brightly coloured stuffs—failing all else, a bed-quilt of patchwork or a tartan shawl was not disdained. And they swung and swayed gently this way and that in the hot, drowsy breeze which softly came and went like the breath of a sleeping

giant troubled and oppressed. And within the houses of the Andamaners all was bustle of washing and dressing for the great festival.

But no wedding in Ilkastane was reckoned reputable, much less successful, without cabs—equipages with festive caparisons—drivers in white gloves, and horses with their ears in white network pockets, from which hung tickling tassels that made the beasts shake their heads as if they were tormented by flies. There was nowhere in particular for either brides or bridegrooms or wedding guests to be driven to, but yet it appeared to Steven an essential part of the ceremony that there should be cabs, and somehow they had been forgotten. The Master was appealed to, and he commissioned the Commander of the Native Contingent himself to go into the town in search of cabs. He chose his young friend Hamish for lieutenant, and together they set off.

The cabmen of the town were not taken with the notion of visiting so unapproachable and poverty-stricken a place as Ilkastane, even for a wedding; so they all with one accord began to make excuse. At length the drivers of four old "shandry-dans" were found willing to go. Steven and his lieutenant, suffused with delight and importance, rode all the way back to Ilkastane in one of the vehicles. There was, however, in the boy's delight a strain of dissatisfaction—that it was impossible to ride in all four cabs at once; and in the soldier's a fermenting foreboding which at last found expression.

"Demmit, Hamish!" and he shook his head and winked at the boy in disgust, "this is mean, ye ken!—demd mean! No a glove or a lug-net among the bloomin' lot! I'd as lief be no married as no ha'e my naig and my driver in uniform! There's nae style, ye ken, and nae discipline! And it's demd unlucky! I dinna like it, min!"

The Master laughed at Steven's fears of ill-luck, and he himself drove off in one cab to bring the minister (a "stickit" gentleman, or rather a failure, of that order, who kept a small school near Freedom, had been engaged for the purpose; for the Andamaners were too little wont to seek



"the means of grace" to have the countenance to invite among them a minister in regular duty, whether of the Established Kirk, the Free, or the U. P.), and Steven's "Send," or best man, Donald, drove off in another to bring Kirsty Kyle and her daughter, while the remaining two were similarly employed on behalf of other couples, a drive in a cab being as necessary an adjunct as a dance of a properly conducted marriage. Kirsty, when taken up at her door in the loan, demanded her right in full measure.

"It's no ilka day we ha'e a coach, so tak's round by the Craigie Loan, man, and the Stocket Head," she said to the driver.

"But we'll keep the minister waitin', gude-mither," objected Donald, "to tak' sic a jaunt."

"Dinna gude-mither me afore my time! I'm gude-mither to naeboddy yet! And let him wait!"

"He's had a routh o' waitin' in's time, poor chiel!" said the bride.

"Ay, they say he's a stickit ane. Weel, the stickit anes aye bide the langest, and he can tak' this bit wait in the day's darg. Standing a whilie will settle his parritch."

"Weel, Janet," said Donald, smiling on the bride in Steven's behalf, "s'all we gang, or no gang?"

"Gang, for sure, Donald!" exclaimed the dutiful daughter, "when my mither wants it!"

"Achy, I should think sae!" exclaimed Kirsty drily. "Ca' on, man."

The Master had a great compassion for failures, howsoever they had failed. It was, alas! not difficult to know one cause at least of the minister's failure, for his red-spotted countenance, his trembling lips, and his jottering hands proclaimed it. He was so shaken with nerves at the prospect of the duty he had undertaken, that, when they arrived among the company assembled in the square of the close, the Master, without a word, took him to his garret and poured him out a dram of strong waters.

"Ay," said the failure, "but ye're a good man, and no a Pharisee. Ye understand the weakness o' another, and ye

minister to't without self-righteous pride. Oh, I ken ye fine, man."

There was much solemn tittering among the young couples as they were marshalled before the minister for the ceremony, and a good deal of nudging; but they were all attention and silence when he prayed over them with "great liberty and melting." They were no kirk-goers, but they were Scottish enough to be critical of the performance; and they were agreed that he had contributed a "bonny prayer," and that it was a wonder so clever a minister should be "stickit."

When the ceremony was over there was an effusion of hand-shaking and of tears; and then—*Bang! Bang! Pf-z-z! Pft-t!*

"Preserve's a'!" exclaimed Kirsty Kyle. "What in the world's that? Is't the enemy?"

"Demmit, gude-mither!" exclaimed the Commander of the Native Contingent, "it's the salute—the military salute! It's the beginnin' o' the campaign! *Pum-pum!* Drum and fife! It'll be 'Over the mountains, over the main!' in a wee! Eh! Whaur's King Jamie? Three cheers and a Hieland *hooch* for King Jamie."

"Nane o' that, Steven!" said the Master, advancing with a look of severity. "Ye mind the order, 'Strict secrecy and dispatch.' But come awa'; the denner's ready."

Dinner was spread on tables on the "green," a drying and bleaching ground in the midst of the kail-yards of the inhabitants of the close; and by stretching clothes-lines from the drying poles at the four corners, and spreading sheets over the lines, an awning had been formed.

The tables bore smoking haggis, vast ashets of kail and cream, great dishes of thickened or "yirned" milk, and piles of oat-cakes. Soon there were only heard the prevailing clink of spoons and the suction of many mouths; though here and there a word sprang up in the general silence, like a weed bearing witness to the richness of the soil it sprang from. The Master, King Jamie of Andaman, sat at the head of the chief table, and, like the King in the ballad, "he looked upon his people, and a tear was in his eye," and still

Andaman and Aimée interplayed in all his thoughts. He looked upon his people—a hundred feeding as one—and he thought, as a father of his children, why should they not feed?—why?—and concentrate for the time all their mind on their enjoyment? since they had for years most patiently borne the eager, gnawing pains of poverty! Heaven be thanked, that was but a foretaste of the fresh, fat things in store for the hungry weaver and his family! Soon (he thought with a swelling heart) we shall all sit thus, with the palm-trees waving over us; with no malodorous gutter flowing a little way off, but a fresh, sparkling rill, like that which gushed when Moses smote the rock; not shut in by grim, harled houses and weaving-shops, but with flowers and grass, hill and valley, sand and sea—all God's wonderful world!—open to the view! And wherever his eye flitted and roved in fancy, his heart was aware of a bright presence, inspiring and illuminating the scene, now shining like the sun, and now like a bright particular star, and again like a lily in bloom in a garden; and still as he dreamt he was ever and anon subtly conscious, with a warm gush of feeling, that this bright presence was a lovely, enchanting creature of warm flesh and blood, of like feelings and passions with himself.

But he was brought back to what was before him by a rude shock. He turned, and encountered close to him a pair of eyes, earnest, large and dark, the whites of a jaundiced yellow, sunk in the sockets, and overshadowed by thick black brows; the foetid breath was on his cheek, and the sepulchral voice in his ear, of Hay, the tall, worn consumptive.

"I can see ye're thinkin' o' that bonny fresh island! I'm aye thinkin' o't! Day and night my hoast rives me to tatters, and I aye put up a bit prayer that it mayna be lang afore we gae 'wa'! Man, ye mind, sir, I used to be as strong as a horse; ay, an' I'll be't again when I win oot o' this! But we'll be aff in a wee, I daursay?"

"Surely, Hay, surely. Aff in a wee, out o' this deevilish warstle!"

Dinner being finished, several were tuning their pipes

for song. There were many irregular, sporadic notes, and then some one began to sing the exceedingly sad farewell of the Highland emigrant, "Lochaber no more." During the singing of that there was much shedding of tears; and then, to add to the effect of melancholy sentiment, another singer sang "The Land o' the Leal," which produced more tears. It would have seemed to a casual observer that a reaction had set in from the earlier gaiety; but that would have been a mistaken view, for in the Northern nature melancholy ever sits hand in hand with gaiety.

"Eh, sirs," said Kirsty Kyle, wiping her eyes, "but it'll be unco sair for an auld body like me to leave the auld house whaur my man ance sat in the chimley-neuk, and the bit kail-yard he used to delve in!"

All who heard agreed and sympathised with her; and yet the next moment they received with laughing approval the protest of Steven.

"Demmit," cried the Commander of the Native Contingent, "let's ha'e a good auld sang about fechtin'!"

He himself tried to raise "The Standard on the Braes o' Mar," but failed ignominiously.

Then, "Demmit! Come, Hamish!" he cried. "Hamish is the boy! He's a deacon at the singin'!" Hamish inquired what he should sing, and Steven answered, "Ye ken!"

Hamish did ken. He mounted on a chair and stood an instant, pale and trembling, looking round upon the company; and then he launched away upon his one song—"See the conquering he-he-he-he-he-ro co-omes!"

All the while the Master sat at his table, held in talk by the minister. The minister was curious about everything he saw and heard, and pushed inquiries concerning the meaning of it. The Master answered with no more reserve than mere prudence dictated, and the minister was so taken with the replies and demeanour of the Master, that he was for expressing a desire to go also to Andaman, when O'Rhea, who had been presiding at another table, came and sat down beside them.

That was the situation while Hamish was singing. When

he came to the end of his song, a strange thing happened. There suddenly appeared in the full sunshine, just without the improvised awning, one who had not for years been seen in public, save in the most furtive, ashamed, or cat-like fashion—Kitty M'Cree, Hamish's mother. The sight of the familiar banner of the weavers and the sounds of rejoicing had doubtless waked her memory, and she now appeared with a smile on her lips, a hectic flush on her cheek, and a feverish light in her eye. She was wonderfully thin, but she still retained the elegance of form of which she had been vain, and there was a remote quaintness in her dress, and a simple pride in her bearing which arrested every eye and kept everyone silent. She wore a white girlish frock of very old fashion—it was short in the skirt and disclosed a pair of low shoes bound with correct black braid crosswise upon a high, white-stockinged instep; and it was jimp in the waist, and had leg-of-mutton sleeves. About her neck was loosely cast a silk-fringed scarf—blue like the weavers' banner—and on her head a large hat of Leghorn straw with blue flowers. Immediately on her appearance she stepped into the assembly with her mittened hands crossed before her, and deliberately paced up the midst, shedding smiles and bows on either hand.

She made for Hamish. He saw her approach, with her glittering eye on him, and the terror which he had so often felt on the stair-head, when he had seen her sitting in a haze of flaxen dust, and making her wheel madly whirl while she madly muttered and smiled—that terror held him glued to his station on the chair. She stood by his side and took his unresisting hand, like a patroness.

"Ye're a bonny laddie, and ye sing gey bonnily," she said. "What do they ca' ye?"

"E—eh!" There was a universal sound of astonishment and pain, like a sudden sough of wind among fir-trees. "She doesna ken him!" was whispered.

"Hamish M'Cree," answered the boy somewhat sulkily.

He did not like his perch, and the sound of her voice having broken the spell she had upon him, he descended to the ground without ceremony. But she still held his hand.

"M'Cree?" she murmured in slow inquiry, adapted to the comprehension of youth. "But *my* name's M'Cree!"

"It's your ain loon, Kitty!" someone had the hardihood to cry.

She looked round calmly, but her eye dwelt upon no one in particular.

"Ye're wrang, good folk," she said, bowing. "I ha'e nae bairn. I'm no married, ye ken. I ha'e a lad," she continued in a manner of meditation, as if labouring in memory, "a bonny lad—a grand, big, buirdly man"—the company looked in doubtful inquiry at each other, for all knew the common story of her connection with the Master's brother—"but," she continued with a swelling sigh, "he's gane awa'!" No one spoke, and she addressed herself again to Hamish. "You and me," she said, "maun gang up and mak' our bow to the President."

She paced up to the table where the Master sat with the minister on one side and O'Rhea on the other. She seemed on the point of recognising and addressing Hutcheon, when the great red hairy scarred hand of O'Rhea (who sat with sharply averted head, but with hand and arm flung on the table) caught her shifting gaze. She stared at it an instant, and the Master was drawn into staring also; and then she softly took the hand in her own and stroked it. Upon that O'Rhea turned involuntarily with an ugly, angry face. He said no word, but he caught Kitty's eye, and tried desperately to frown her off. She withered somewhat under his gaze, but she would not let him go; and he doubtless feared, or scorned, to withdraw his hand roughly.

"Fergus!" she murmured, as if in a dream. "It is Fergus—is it no?"

"Ay, it's Fergus," answered the Master.

The sound of the Master's voice seemed to disconcert her; but Fergus would not speak.

"But he's gane awa'!" she murmured. "Ay, I mind. I was to gae wi' him, but he never cam' for me!—never!—never!"

There was silence, while it seemed as if she would weep—she who had not wept, it was said, since that awful night

on which the Chartist leaders fled. Absently and uncertainly she laid her hand on Hamish's head, and that drew the Master's attention anew to the boy's hair. From the boy's head he glanced at O'Rhea's, and then, like the striking of sparks, the whole truth came to him, and seemed so plain that he was amazed it had not come to him before.

Just then the fiddler began to screw up his instrument—"prut-trut"—and Kitty turned away with brisk ear. O'Rhea's eyes, disengaged from her, swung round upon the Master. He met a gaze direct, cold, and terrible, that did not waver or blench, and he knew that the secret he had successfully kept shut so long was now laid open.

"Keep hold o' her hand, Hamish," said the Master, giving a glance to the boy. "And now, Fergus, you and me'll ha'e a word. Come wi' me."

"All right, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, and you could not have guessed from his voice if he cared a jot.

The Master rose from his seat, and the minister rose too, as well as O'Rhea, as if to accompany them. The fiddle uttered its preliminary squawk.

"Now, bairns," said the Master, as he passed among the young people fidging for the dance, and pointing their toes, "at it wi' a will!"

He stood an instant, seeming neither severe nor discomposed, so that O'Rhea did not know how to augur of the tone he might assume when they were alone.

"You have not, sir," said the minister, smiling, "the prejudice of the unco guid against dancing?"

"No," said the Master simply, "I havena. And it's well thought on—just bide ye here; I may ha'e need o' ye."

And O'Rhea, as he walked off with the Master, wondered what that saying might mean.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## A STRANGE MARRIAGE.

THE Master marched on in silence to his garret, and O'Rhea followed. As if to break the monotony of his progress, and to assure himself he was at his ease, the latter lingered an instant before he left the close to spit, and to stroke a cat that came in his way. The Master took up his favourite station with his back to the fire (the fire was even then alive with a slumbering lump of peat), and O'Rhea sat down under the skylight by the carpenter's bench, and took up a chisel and felt its edge with his thumb.

"Am I right," asked the Master, "in my thought that it's you was Kitty's sweetheart, and no my brother?"

"Well, Hutcheon," answered Fergus with a snigger, "we were both, you know, 'wooin' at her, pu'in at her,' to use the words of your Scotch song."

"Tut!" exclaimed the Master. "Gi'e me a plain answer; ye ken what I mean. Ye're the father o' the loon Hamish, are ye no?"

"I suppose I am; he looks like it."

"He's the image o' ye; and I wonder now I didna see't before."

"Look here, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, laying down the chisel, and attempting to turn the Master's flank by a frank confession, "I admit there is every reason to believe I am the boy's father. What then? I meant the girl no harm. It's done, and it can't be undone."

"Ay, it's done, but it's not done wi'."

"What do you mean?"

"Man, Fergus, I wonder at ye. I aye kenned ye were no a gentleman, but I did no think ye were a blackguard! Bide still! Sit down!" There was that in the Master's eye which had to be obeyed. "Ye not only had your will o' the lassie, but ye left her in her trouble, no carin', and without a word! More than that, all the weeks sin' ye've been back here ye've never opened your mouth to me about it,



nor sought to set eye on her, though ye well kenned I was blaming my brither all the while, and had a grudge against him because I thought *he* had forgotten he was a gentleman! And even now, at this long last, ye've no a word to say but 'it's done, and can't be undone.' And so ye shift the thing off on God Almighty to do what He can on the Day o' Judgment."

O'Rhea glowered in a very ugly temper, but he kept command of himself. He was clearly resolved to endure a great deal rather than endanger his hold of the arrangements for Andaman. His hope was in retreat. He rose.

"All right, Hutcheon," said he, with a reckless smile. "If God Almighty can wait till then, so cau ye. I'll answer you then both together;" and he was about to go.

"Bide a wee, Fergus," said the Master. "I havena the patience o' the Almighty; and, moreover, I'm here to do some o' His business among the folk He has set me ower!"

"Say on, say on," said the other with a laugh, flinging himself down again by the table, but he did not tempt the Master from his serious and lofty position.

"I was hoping, Fergus," said the Master, "that you'd say you'd do it of your own self."

O'Rhea looked genuinely puzzled.

"Man!" exclaimed the Master, "are ye so lost to the sense o' things that ye mean to say ye havena thought o't?"

"Don't know what you mean, Hutcheon."

"*Ye must marry Kitty M'Cree.*"

O'Rhea, who was making elaborate pretence of indifference by scrawling imaginary characters on the table with his finger-tip, looked with amazement shining in his eye, and dropping from his scornful, sensual nether lip.

"Pon my word! You're coming it strong! You're putting your foot down like God Almighty Himself! It's too much of a joke, though!" and he viciously rubbed his cheek and rumbled his obstinate hair, and laughed. "Strewth! Marry Kitty! Poor Kitty! She was tempting once!" And a leering look of tenderness came over his continent of face. "But you forget, Hutcheon! you forget, my friend, that she's as mad as a hatter!"

"She's as ye made her," answered the Master, bating not a jot his cold, calm severity of eye and manner. "She's your handiwork!"

"Do you mean it, Hntcheon?" demanded O'Rhea, wavering on the line between fear and defiance.

"I mean it, as sure as death!" answered the Master still quietly.

"Then," said the other, rising and giving way to the turbulent resentment boiling and foaming in him, "I'll be d—d if I do!—and I'll see you d—d, and her d—d too!" and he beat his great fist on the table with every word of emphasis.

The Master moved his hand as if to wave off the odour of foul reek.

"Ye'll think better o't, Fergus," said he, "or yon and me maun part."

"Really," said O'Rhea, glancing at the Master as if in discovery, "we must have all gone mad together! But no, no, no! I'm sane, at least! 'Pon my word, Hntcheon, I must say to you as somebody says in the Bible, 'Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?' Is he a mad dog, sir, that he should marry this mad b—woman?"

"As I ha'e said already, Fergus, clash o' her daftness comes ill frae your mouth. Daft though she be, ye owe a duty to her and to the loon Hamish; ye owe it to baith to gi'e them your name, for the laddie's sake, if for no other.\* Ay, and ye owe it to the good name o' my brither, and so my hinmost word is: Marry Kitty, or cut your stick; ha'e no more word to say to me or mine, and ha'e done both wi' Ilkastane and Andaman and wi' all that concerns them. I've said my say."

O'Rhea at length felt in his soul the force of that unbending severity. He drew himself together; with quick-winking eye and scratching finger he turned this way and that in thought. The hand of the Master was heavy on him and would not let him go. To lose what "Andaman"

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\* According to Scots law, a bastard child is legitimised if its parents marry at any time.

meant for him, after all his toil!—no, not if he had to marry a thousand mad women! His daring and adroitness of understanding did not forsake him. In a flash of thought he saw as in a glass what he would do—yes, and gain his end more completely and vengefully than he had intended. He yielded with a kind of obscene glee, and yet remained true to his great, plausible self. He expressed himself with such a bravura of good feeling and generosity that the Master thought hardly less of him than before.

“Ah, there you have me, Hutcheon. It would break my heart to be cut off now from you and Andaman; but yet it’s not that that makes me say, ‘I’ll do it.’ You do right to remind me of George—right, Hutcheon, as ever—for can I ever forget that we were like brothers together, and how I shared the bounty you scraped together to get him off with! So, Hutcheon, what I would do for no threat or compulsion whatsoever, I’ll do for George’s sake, since you wish to have it so; yes, and for the boy’s sake, whom you have treated like a son. That I can never forget, Hutcheon—never! so help me God!—and so I’ll marry Kitty.”

He rose and offered Hutcheon his hand. A tear of genuine emotion was in his eye, and the Master could not forbear to give him the clasp of reconciliation; for surely, he thought, never was there a creature of better feeling than O’Rhea—wayward, blustering, and even rebellious, but truly docile, faithful and honest as the day—a man whom it was as good to know as to feel the stress of Scottish weather.

“And ye’ll marry her now afore all the folk?” said the Master.

O’Rhea’s only answer was a tighter grip of the hand; for there was a new pang of rage and mortification in his heart which would not let him speak.

They marched forth into the sunlight again, and on to the green under the awning, whence were borne to them the untiring music of the blind fiddler, the fiercer snap of the fingers, and the wild “*hooch!*” of the Scottish dance. The Master pushed his way among the swirling, laughing throng until he reached the fiddler’s side.

"Whenever ye're through wi' this spring, Willie," said he, "haud a wee."

He stood and observed the dance (O'Rhea being at his elbow), and heard without emotion now the prance and bounce of feet and the swish of petticoats, the crack of thumbs, and the frenzied "*hooch!*" When the dance was ended, he held up his hand, and his eye sought out Kitty M'Cree and the minister.

"Lads and lasses," said he, "rest ye a wee, and tak' your breath—I've something to say." The lassies fell back with their partners, with heaving bosoms and sparkling eyes, smoothing their hair and patting their gowns. "We're gaun to ha'e another marriage, and syne ye can loup awa' wi' another reel o' Tullochgorum. Ay, another marriage, like a dessert after meat, though ye may laugh, ye limmers! And there's no ane o' ye can guess the bride! Hamish," he called, "bring your mother here—ay, bring Kitty M'Cree, my man."

There was a hum of amazement.

"E-eh, guidstakes! Wha would ha' thought it!" as Kitty paced forward, led by her son.

"Ay, it's a world's wonder," continued the Master, "but the long and the short o't is that our auld friend, Fergus O'Rhea, thinks it weel at this identical time to stan' up afore ye all to mak' her, that was ance his sweetheart, his wife, and to confess the laddie Hamish his son!"

Again there was a subdued chorus of "E-eh!"

"Saunders M'Cree," called the Master, "step up here and do your duty."

M'Cree pressed forward, from where he stood behind the dancers, red with excitement. Arrived at the front of the throng he stopped.

"*Bu-h-h!*" he began. "Am I to understand, sir——"

But he was interrupted by Kirsty Kyle, who said, loud enough for all to hear:

"Haud your whisht, ye weary auld randy! Gang up and do as ye're bid! Is the Hutcheon to be ca'd in question like an orra tinkler?"

At that there was loud laughter, and urged forward by

many ready hands, M'Cree reached the Master's side. Then was arranged the strangely-assorted wedding party. Kitty, smiling with crazy but wistful gaze, Hamish with eyes and mouth agape with wonder, M'Cree silent but pompous in his imagined *rôle* of a stern, sacrificatory Roman father, and O'Rhea with his set, savage sneer. The marriage and its circumstances were strange enough, but they seemed to make little impression on the on-lookers; and for that there was reason, seeing that, with an ever-present marvel like the "fitting" to think of, there could be no room in their minds for the entertainment of lesser wonders. The ceremony was performed, and the nervous minister prayed, but not with such "liberty and melting" as before, for he scarcely understood the situation, and the eye of O'Rhea constrained him.

"By your leave, Hutcheon," said O'Rhea, when the ceremony was concluded, "I'll go and get my shanty ready for the home-coming of my wife; for what is good enough for an old wanderer and tarry-breeks like myself will hardly suit a delicate creature like Kitty."

There was a suspicion of sarcasm in his tone which made the Master consider him.

"But," said he, "ye'll lead off a spring wi' her first, will ye no?"

O'Rhea yielded in silence. The reel of Tullochgorum was struck up, and he led off the dance with Kitty; but presently he and his partner dropped out, and then he disappeared alone.

The Master sat down again, content with what he had done. But why had he done it? He would have failed to give a categorical reason, for marriage was of small advantage now to Kitty; and still he had a vague, flitting hope that it might be the means of her recovery. And then there was the remoter consideration of his dead brother's reputation. Yet, in truth, he had compelled O'Rhea out of obstinate, chivalric, masterful impulse. He had an all-pervading kindness and tenderness for women, all the warmer and more potent now that he was in love, and a lofty hatred and fierce impatience of all the male tricks

for overcoming female shyness and reluctance; and it gave him an acute and strengthening delight to check-mate a betrayer, even at the eleventh hour to take him by the ear and lead him up to his duty. So he contentedly sat, and conversed with the minister, and ended by making of him also a proselyte and a pilgrim to Andaman.

Still the sounds of the fiddle and the dance went on. The sun wore in the west, and the whole company sat down to eat and drink tea, and again rose up to play. Far away over the kail-yards of Ilkastane and the low region that lay between it and Inverdoon, the spires and steeples of the city stood up and caught the sunlight, and their vanes and weathercocks flashed like burnished gold; and farther away—far, far away—in a mirage of the imagination were the blue sea and the palm-trees and the banyans of Andaman.

The evening came, and with it suddenly appeared George Lepine, just when they were lighting the bonfire in the square of the close.

"My father has come back," he said at once to the Master.

The Master looked at him closely; there was something hard in his tone, and in the expression of his face and his open roving eye, which suggested that all was not well.

"He is?" said Hutcheon. "And nobody besides?"

"Nobody else," answered the young man. "Nor has he a word to say about anybody else. And, to tell you the truth, I think he doesn't mean to bring anybody else back."

"What! not at all? Ye dinna mean that!"

"I mean," said the other, "not for a long while—not till it may be too late!"

"Well," said the Master, "I must ha'e a word with him."

"The sooner the better," said George.

They looked at each other. The Master settled his bonnet on his head, and they set off.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## A PLOT.

THE Bailie had returned home, and for some reason he paced restlessly in his garden after his dinner, instead of sitting still, as was his wont, and patiently permitting digestion to have her perfect work. It may be that he had a suspicion the Master of Hutcheon would not like his returning from the South alone, and that his imagination of the Master's eye and nose, when they should look each other in the face, disturbed him. They met sooner than the Bailie had expected. While he was pacing that path by the little summer-house, where O'Rhea had addressed him from the wall, Jaques came to him and said that *le Maître d'Hutcheon* had just appeared with M'sieu George, and had asked for *M'sieu le Bailli*.

"I will come," said the Bailie, taking his hands from his pockets and making a step towards the house. Then, bethinking himself of something, "*Non, non! Pardieu*, let him come! *Oui*, here let him come!"

Jaques went, and the Master came, followed by George Lepine. The Master loomed, perhaps, larger than ever in the gloom, but his nose and eye were in less dominant evidence, and so the Bailie, doubtless, felt an unusual boldness before him.

"Ah, *M'sieu le Maître*," was his light greeting, and then, "is it my rascal behind you? For what hide you, sir, behind the *gros* Mister Hutcheon?"

"I am not hiding, father," protested the young man. "The Master is a person of more consequence than I am, and so he came first. That's all;" and with that he came forward and ranged himself alongside the Master.

"Do not me contradict, sir!" exclaimed the Bailie in a raised voice. "You *cache* you! You skulk! It please you to go against your father!—to disobey! But you will not, *entendez-vous!*—you will not!"

The Master's slow, calm voice broke in:

"Ye're braw and cool here, Bailie. It's a bonny neuk, and should soothe the mind o' a man."

"Yes," said the Bailie, "it is cool; it is dark; but the dark make one think many things."

"It's well said, Bailie. And, among your many thinkings, have ye thought o' the needcessity o' dispatch in this wedding o' mine? All things are now about ready—so near ready that I may say I'm but waiting for my wife to set out."

"Ah, *oui—oui, m'sieu*," said the Bailie. "I have thought, sir—and I think, me, that it is better you wait for the return from the mission of *la haute politique*—much better."

"But that's a gey change in your say, Bailie! Your last word to me was that the marriage should come off afore I set out."

"But I think, sir—I think after then; and I hear that you go far away, and that it can be you do not come again—never. You have never tell me nothing—nothing!—but I hear. The word is in the town, sir."

The Master was silent an instant. He perceived he was at a critical turn.

"Let us understand ane another once for all, Bailie. I told ye as much about the business as I thought Her Majesty's orders allowed me to tell, and your word was, 'If my daughter is willing, I am willing.' Your daughter, Bailie, knows the whole heart.o' the business, and she is willing—or was, Bailie."

The Bailie was uneasy. The Master's direct, forcible tone struck alarm on his ear, and his imagination of the dominating eye and nose thrilled his nerves.

"I am father, sir," said he.

"Hoots!" said the Master. "Ye needua tell me that!"

"And I think of the good of my daughter," added the Bailie.

"Well, Bailie, sin' she and me plighted troth I'm for reckoning myself her man—her husband. It's the way o' our folk, as I daursay ye know, Bailie. And so I put it to ye—where is she that should be my wife?"

"She is not here, sir," was all the Bailie's answer.



"Guidsakes, man! Am I no to be trusted?" exclaimed the Master. "Ye're no dealing fairly and openly with me, Bailie! I'm telling ye, man, that I'm thinking more o' the real welfare and happiness o' the lassie than ye are; for I doubt ye're blind to all that's no afore your een! She's dearer to me than my own soul! She's the apple o' my e'e. And, though we have plighted troth, what I say now is, 'Let her stand afore me and make her choice again.' If she says to me afore you, 'No, I'd rather not marry and go far away with ye to yon place——'"

"What place?" exclaimed the Bailie sharply. "What is 'yon place'?"

"It is the place," answered the Master, with a parenthetical wave of the hand, "where we are going to. If she says that, then I will ha'e done. I'll go my ways my lone. But, Bailie, I will ha'e her answer from her own mouth!"

Before the Bailie could reply to that, a glowing light appeared hurrying towards them; and the Bailie waited, saying, "Who is this?" It was Jaques, bearing a lamp. He went directly to the Bailie and put a scrap of paper in his hand.

"Pardon!" said the Bailie, glancing from it to the Master.

Jaques held the light handy, and the Bailie read to himself with amazement:

"Excuse me, Bailie. I have heard your talk over the wall. I have an idea. Come and speak to me for a moment before you make Mr. H. any answer.

"YOUR FRIEND OVER THE WALL."

"Where?" demanded the Bailie at once of Jaques.

"*Salle-à-manger*," said Jaques.

"Excuse me a moment," said the Bailie to the Master. "Jaques; put the lamp there;" and Jaques put the lamp on the little table of the summer-house, and followed his master.

"Well," said the Bailie impatiently, as soon as he caught

sight of O'Rhea standing in the dining-room. "What is it? What is it? *Hein?*"

O'Rhea's immediate answer was to pass swiftly to the door and close it.

"Phoo!" said he, blowing and mopping his great red face with his large red handkerchief. "I'm all of a sweat with tearing in! When the point you were discussing with Mr. Hutcheon, Bailie, caught my ear—caught my ear like a fish-hook, sir—it fairly dragged me in here; for, thinks I, now's the nick of time to requite the Bailie for all his kindness!"

"Well, sir, what?" demanded the Bailie. "*Vite!—vite!*"

"Certainly, Bailie. And we need not waste time with explanation. I understand perfectly your point of view. You don't want to quarrel with the Master of Hutcheon, and yet you don't wish to let him have his way in marrying your daughter at once and carrying her off, you don't know where, into dangers you can't guess. Is that so?"

"That is so."

"Right. You don't mind bringing your daughter home, and letting her meet the Master, if no harm comes of it. Is that so?"

"That is so."

"Right again. Now I'm here to show you, Bailie, if you will accept my suggestion, how no harm need come of it. How shall I put it to you?" He posed himself, with his eye fiercely bent on a dark corner of the room, and the end of his forefinger between his teeth. "This is it. There is absolutely no need for the Master of Hutcheon to go on this expedition——"

"What?" cried the Bailie. "Is he not appoint by the Queen? No?"

"You'll understand about that presently," said O'Rhea, with a smile and a weighty wag of the head. "The Master is an excellent, loyal creature, but he is a visionary; he has his head in the clouds; he is not fit to deal with the ordinary affairs of life, as you know."

"I know, me!" said the Bailie, nodding his head and pursing his mouth.

"Well, Bailie, the truth is, he is the ornamental head of this expedition, but the real working head is your humble servant."

"Ah," said the Bailie, with a cunning look of suspicion and enlightenment, "is that so?"

"And the truth again is, it will be better both for you and for me if he does not go; better for you, because you will still have the chance of a noble son-in-law with twenty thousand pounds and no expensive tastes; and better for me, because, on this dangerous expedition, he would in reality be only a skinful of trouble. So this is my suggestion, Bailie," and he emphasised it with two scarred fingers in his palm, and with gathered brow: "let him and your son go together to Edinburgh to bring your daughter home, and while they're away I'll clear off bag and baggage."

"But, *mais*, will he not follow? *Hein*?"

"He can't, Bailie! he can't," cried the other, making his last desperate move, and fiercely rapping his fingers in his palm. "And why? Because I've had all the preparations in my hands, and only me, Bailie—only me!—knows where the expedition is bound for!"

"Ah, good!—good!—good! It is very good!" said the Bailie with emphasis. But there was a spark of suspicion in his eye. He advanced a step and laid a confidential hand on O'Rhea's arm. "I will do it, what you say. You are very clever to think of it, *mon Mirabeau*; but—*entendez-vous*!—if you go not away clear, if you make not what you call clean heels, and the Master catch you, then I know nothing—*entendez-vous*!—it is your affair."

"Certainly, Bailie, certainly. Don't you fear. The Master is not the Great Mogul; and I'm quite able to take care of myself."

"Then I return," said the Bailie, "to my gentleman. I am obliged, sir," he added with a duck of his head, and a touch of recoil from the gross, heated presence of O'Rhea, as if he bethought him that it was unbecoming in a town's dignitary to be so familiarly associated with such a man.

O'Rhea noted the action, and was shrewd enough to understand it. With a scornful leer he said :

"And so, Bailie, we are quits. I am a man that never forgets a favour till it's repaid. So we're quits, I say. For now you go your way, and I go mine."

The Bailie nodded, and nodded, and nodded again, but said no word; he scarcely understood the large, effusive, generous and crafty person before him. With a laugh and a leer O'Rhea went off, and the Bailie returned to the dark walk at the end of the garden.

While he was yet a good way off he noted the Master and his son sitting together in the summer-house with the lamp between them. He saw the Master put his hand kindly on George's shoulder, and he was pleased—he scarce knew why—that they should be on such friendly terms. He thought cheerfully that if the Master could be kept from going away on this mysterious expedition it might be very pleasant for all of them. As he approached nearer, George exclaimed, loud enough for his father to hear, "No, no! Don't speak of it now! Please don't!" There was evident anxiety in his tone, and his father, with a pang of suspicion, surmised that their talk then must have concerned Elsie M'Cree. But he was still resolved to appear cheerful.

"Well," said he, without offering an explanation of his absence, "I return. I am sorry to have keep you waiting, *M'sieu le Maître*—and I am not sorry all the same, because going away has made me think of something to please you."

"I am glad o' that," said the Master simply.

"Yes; I think of what you say, and I agree that Aimée come home and answer for herself. But me, I cannot go to bring her, because I have just come. I have not see the mill for long time, you know, and my rascal there, he, perhaps, make six or seven of everything. Well, me I cannot go, but go you and bring her, and take my rascal with you. Will that you please? You go to-morrow and come the next day, *hein?*"

The Master appeared like a boy in prospect of his first

jaunt. He blushed with delight, and rose and said very graciously to the Bailie :

"It's very kind in ye, Bailie, to think o' that way. Ay, I'll go!—I should just think I will!"

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE PLOT THICKENS.

FERGUS O'RHEA returned to his shanty laughing, and gleefully rubbing the knuckles of one hand in the palm of the other as if he would beget fire by friction.

"'The Lord hath delivered him into my hands!'" he said to himself again and again; for O'Rhea could quote Scripture like Satan himself—ay, and find as much solace and satisfaction in the turn of a text as could any saint.

And now, note a strange thing he did when he had entered his shanty. The building really consisted of two "tenements," both on the ground floor, with a flagged passage between. It was an old, a very old, building, and probably had been in the past part of the domestic offices of Corbie Ha'. The passage was closed by a stout door at either end—the front door and the back. The candle he had left burning when he had run in to the Bailie's shone out through the open side-door, so that its light streamed slantwise into the passage and showed up, as he entered, a peculiar stain, like a bleeding heart, on the back door. He seized a candle (which was stuck in a black bottle) and went close and perused the stain. It seemed to be merely an old splash of red paint; but with a laugh and an oath he smote his hand on it, and then passing quickly into his living-room he took a bit of chalk and a long sheath-knife in his hand and returned to the door. Thereon he rudely scrawled the outline of a tall male figure, inclosing the bleeding heart on the left and close by, dabbing on two buttons in a

line across, and on the featureless head drawing a broad bonnet. It was clear he meant to represent the back of a man. He stood back and surveyed his handiwork with a gleeful snigger; and then a sudden thought took him, and, with a roll of *te-heeing*, he stepped forward, rubbed out the broad bonnet and drew a crown in its place. That done, he set the candle on the floor, retreated a yard or two, and began throwing his knife with such dexterity and precision of aim that it never failed to pierce the bleeding heart. His exercise afforded him great satisfaction, for there was more of the savage than of the civilised man in him. So much was this so, that with his exertion he wrought himself to a notable pitch of excitement, and flung the knife with more and more fury and force, till the blade vibrated and hummed as it pierced the wood deeper and deeper. And at each cast he cried aloud:

"*A-ha!* That's for you, you beggar! *A-ha!* How do you like that? You'd master me, would you? I master you! *A-ha!* A king are you? Oh, my stars and garters! A king! *A-ha!* A king of my making! A bl—d serious fool of a king! A penny plain, twopence coloured king! *A-ha!* Fergus, you've got him!—the ass!—the pretender!—the usurper! Finish him! End him! Why don't you end him—the long Scotch beggar!—the swine!"

And still, as he continued his violent exertion, the spoken words became more and more of a chant, like that of a savage drunk with blood. At length, pretty well exhausted, he stayed his hand. He mopped his face, which was pouring with sweat, and then, as if taken with the humour of his conduct, he leaned against the wall and laughed at himself. "Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

But a glance towards the other end of the passage showed him that the front door was open and that two persons—a woman and a boy—were standing just within it. How long had they been there? With an oath he took the candle from the floor, and advanced roaring:

"Who the devil are you?"

The boy dashed whimpering behind the woman, who stood still to receive O'Rhea's threatening advance. In an

instant he recognised the white dress and the pale face and glittering eyes of Kitty M'Cree—or, rather, of Kitty O'Rhea, his wife.

"Oh, it's you," he said in a careless voice. "Come along, sonnie," he continued, in as kindly a tone as he could assume, putting his hand out and dragging the boy forward by the arm. "Come along!" he cried with impatience. "Do you think I'm an ogre that eats little loons?—or are you feared at the way I was amusing myself?" He shut the door behind them. "Come in," he went on, speaking still to the boy, but with a doubtful, considering glance now and then at Kitty, whose gaze never released him. "I'm glad you're come; I want you."

He led the way into his living-room, with his hand on Hamish's shoulder, and was followed in silence by Kitty.

"Hamish, my son," said he, "I want you to do something—to do something." But his eyes, in furtive astonishment, followed Kitty about as, drawing off her gloves and removing her hat, she set herself quietly to put the room in order, and he could not give his attention to the point of business. "Who sent her here?" he asked Hamish in a low voice.

"She bade me bring her," answered the boy in a scared tone of protest. "It's no my wyte! She said she maun gang hame to her man, 'cause she's been married the day!"

"Oh, she understands that, does she?" exclaimed O'Rhea.

"And ye are her man now, arena ye?" asked the boy.

"Yes," he answered, "I suppose I am, d—n her, and you are my son! But that's all right. We'll get on, won't we? You're a broth of a boy—hey?" and he drew Hamish and pressed him close to his side.

But the boy did not respond. He was instinct with doubt, distress, and fear; and there was not a spark of filial affection to lighten his darkness. He had a mind to cry, but he did not. He spoke up frankly, however, and said:

"I'd rather be the Master's loon. What for did he bid you be my father?"

"It's a pity, isn't it?" sniggered O'Rhea. "But a son

cannot choose his own father, less even than a father can choose his own son. Do ye understand that? No. But ye will some day. And meantime, let me tell you that you'll see, before you are many days older, that it's better to have me for a father than anybody else you can name. So now look alive, my son, and obey your father. Skirt up to Tamson's and get a word with Tam Tamson without his father or mother hearing or seeing—you can manage it—and tell him to come down to me at once—at once, mind! And then you needn't come back here to-night, because I've no bed for you. Sleep as you usually do—at the Master's—and then you can come to me in the morning. Now skirt."

And Hamish set off, not ill-pleased with the arrangement.

Thus O'Rhea was left alone with his daft wife. He was not at his ease in her company; he resented her presence, and he would have given way to the rude desire to bundle her out-of-doors but that he had something of a savage, superstitious dread of her madness, and a kind of shy respect for her quietness and self-possession. Had she revealed any hesitation or shringing before him, it is probable he would have shown himself a lewd fellow of the baser sort; as it was, he leaned on the table sprawling-wise and considered her closely as she went to and fro. She took his peculiar black pipe from the mantelpiece and put its bowl to her nose; she sneezed, and retired from it as a cat might, and he called her to him.

"Come here, Kitty, my dear," he said.

She came and stood over against him, still with her bright eyes fixed on him.

"So you think you know me, Kitty?" he said.

"Ken ye?" said she. "Ay, fine that! Ye're the lad that married me the day, and thank ye kindly."

"Ah, ye're not so daft but that you know you were married?" he cried.

"Daft?" quoth she, as in wonder. "Gosh be here! wha's daft? Ye dinna mean yersel'?"

She leaned towards him with such intent and glittering eyes that he faltered with something of fear.



"Perhaps I am daft!—perhaps I am!" he said lightly, with a sham, airy touch of sadness.

She viewed him in obvious pity and perplexity.

"Ye ha'e been kind, kind to me," she said, "an' I canna leave ye, daft or no. I'll bide wi' ye, and I'll gang wi' ye to the end, though ye should gang to the *ill pairt*!\* Whist!" she said suddenly, laying her hand on his. "Is't windy?"

"Windy?" said he, rising abruptly, and going to the door, for he did not like her close contact, and her eagerness and uncanniness shook his nerves. "No, it can't be!"

She put her hand to her brow and pushed up her hair as if to ease her head from a sense of oppression.

"There's aye a wind roaring and sougling in my head," said she, following him out. "I canna get awa' frae't! It sougls and it roars till my head is sair, and my heart baith. I kenna what for! And whiles it comes in a great bluffart and stounds me, and syne it changes to the sound o' a wee bit bairn catching for breath! Guidsakes! To bide your lone and hear sic things day and night is no mouze!"†

"God's truth!" he exclaimed with a shudder; for clearly he saw that what still affected her senses and imagination was the night of storm on which he had deserted her. He was almost, for the moment, affected to repentance.

"But," she continued in such sprightly fashion that the impression of the past vanished from him, "it's been a pretty day, and the Chartist Banner fluffed bonny in the wind, and the Chartist lads were as brisk at footin' it as ever. Ay, an' I was married afore them a'! If t'ane didna, t'other did; I'm as braw a lass and as honest now as ony o' them, and thank ye kindly. *Woo'd and married and a',*" she said, smiling and beckoning to him, *woo'd and married and a'. Oh, isna she very weel aff that's woo'd and married and a'!*"

Again she took his hand, and again he shook her off by returning into his living-room. Her gratitude and devotion embarrassed him, and her desire to appropriate his hand

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\* That is, *hell*.

† *Mouze*, ordinary, endurable.

made him fear a recrudescence of her identification of him with her lost lover. Moreover, every instant now he was expecting Tam Tamson to appear, and he did not wish that loose-tongued youth to be able to gossip about Kitty's presence in his society. He therefore stood before Kitty with his hands at his back and smiled on her.

"Kitty," said he, "if you're married to me, I'm your man; and consequently you'll do my bidding—won't you?"

"Ay, it's the Lord's will," said she humbly, "that if a woman has a man she should mak' his parritch and mend his sark."

"Well," said he suavely, "I'll not trouble you about porridge to-night, my dear, but in there," nodding his head towards the inner room, "there's a sark or two to look at. Will ye go ben, Kitty?—because," he added, "one of the lads is coming to see me."

With a demure humility she went "ben," O'Rhea lighting her with the candle in the bottle. He set the candle down handy for her, nodded, and shut the door—and softly locked it. Then in the darkness of the outer room he found another candle and another bottle, and scratched an evil-smelling sulphur "spunk" to make a light for himself.

He had barely sat down, scratching his head and sniggering, to consider his odd situation, when he heard a step crunching up to his front door, and he went out to receive Tam Tamson.

"Now," said he, leading the youth in with his arm about his neck, "you dare-devil son of a gun, you must look alive and get that tiddy-bag of yours ready, for it's 'hoist the top-sails' to-morrow night as soon as ever the tide makes!"

"Crikey! Is it, though?" exclaimed the delighted Tam.

"Yes," cried O'Rhea, "and no d—d slinking, creeshie weavers in the company, I can tell you! None but well-seasoned and pickled old tarry-breeks and some dare-devil loons like yourself! I've nobbled the pudding-headed king, and it's 'heave and a-wash!' and, damme, I'm your captain! So now, like the man in the Bible, take your pen quickly and write as I bid you!"

Tam happened to be without his pen and his ink-phial,

and O'Rhea cursed him and bade him use his pencil. He sat down, and O'Rhea tramped to and fro.

"Are you ready?" he asked. "Very well, write:

"'To James Hutcheon, known in Ilkastane, among poor brutes of creeshie weavers, as the Master of Hutcheon—this for your information. You have been imposed on and taken in and made a fool of by him you have patronised and insulted, namely, Fergus O'Rhea. The Royal letter you think so much of is a bare faced fraud and forgery that nobody but an idiot like you and the ignorant idiots round about you would have believed for a moment. It was invented by Fergus O'Rhea for his amusement. The Queen never had your letter, and would not have taken any notice of it or of you if she had. She knows nothing about you, and never appointed you to anything; so, now that the man O'Rhea is off in the ship you kindly paid for, and with the stores your money laid in, and you are flammed and flouted and beggared up, the best thing you can do, since you can't wear a crown, is to repent the rest of your days in a fool's cap.'

"That'll fit him!" said he when he had done dictating. "And now, bl—t you, copy that out in ink at your office! He'll not know the hand; and mind you post it to him to-morrow afternoon. And another thing, my son, and a very important thing: go into the town as early as you can and tell you know who to meet me at 'The Hole in the Wall' at three in the afternoon sharp—three sharp, mind, ye spalpeen! And now you can skirt and spend your last night under the roof of your estimable parents!"

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## INQUISITION.

THAT last act of O'Rhea's was reckless. He knew it was reckless, but he was now so flown with security and insolence, he was so much the kind of person who delights to shave the edge of danger, and he was so bent on reaching well forward, so to say, to deal the Master a vengeful clout, that he perpetrated the recorded piece of levity and impudence, and in its perpetration overlooked the most obvious source of danger. It did not once occur to him the document might miscarry, and that much too early for his purpose.

It came to pass that Tam Tamson made an egregious blunder that very night. Being a young and inexperienced pirate, he was exceedingly lifted up by the new prospect of treading the deck as an enrolled desperado, and in his rejoicing he began to array himself in some of his piratical treasures as soon as he had gone to his garret to bed. He had bought himself a broad leather belt, with vasty buckle, such as heroes are wont to wear when pictured in that literature of "rawhead and bloody bones" in which he delighted, and with that he endued himself. By purchase and by theft he had got together an arsenal of small weapons, notable among which was his mother's best carving-knife in a sheath painfully made out of the leg of a Wellington boot of his father's, and these he desperately stuck in the belt. He had acquired from a barber's shop in town a pair of ample moustachios, and these he pasted on his lip. And then he swaggered up and down the floor, swelling with piratical pride, as if he were on the quarter-deck of the brigantine—swaggered and stamped and swore until the door opened and he faced his angry father.

"What the sorra are ye about? What in the world's earth ha'e ye gotten on? And—guidsakes! a baird? I'se baird ye, ye play-acting nickem!"

Such was the crescendo of amazement and wrath with

which Hew Tamson greeted his son's remarkable presentment. Straightway he seized the loon by the ear and led him from the dim light of his garret down to the clear illumination of the living-room, into the presence of his mother. There the bewildered Tam was beset with exclamations and questions. His weapons were plucked from his belt and examined, and—

“Eh, my best knife, ye thieving limmer!” cried his mother. “Guidsakes, Hew, the loon'll be transported yet!”

“What ha'e I tauld ye?” responded Hew. “‘Spare the rod,’ and ye ken the rest! What's the meaning o' this play-acting ploy? Whaur got ye a' they things? My certy! durks and pistols! D'ye hear me spiering?” And the amazed and wrathful father still pinched his son's ear and shook him by the arm, and still Tam replied only “Nae-whaur” and “Naething.”

“Ripe \* his pouches, Hew!” said the practical mother, “and see what mair he has!”

And Hew “ripped” his son's pockets, and, of course, found the singular letter which Tam had written to O'Rhea's dictation.

“Gi'e me that!” cried the desperate Tam. “That's no mine! That's a letter for Maister Hutcheon! Ye daurna touch that!”

“And what ha'e ye to do wi' Maister Hutcheon?” cried both parents.

The eyes of both met; the same thought shone from both. The letter was not sealed, and so there could be no harm in reading it, though a seal would scarcely have hindered either from learning what was within.

“Read it, Hew,” advised the wife.

And Hew read, with his mind toiling in wonder and perplexity.

“Gosh be here!” he suddenly cried in his rasping voice, “but this maun ha'e to do with the identical clash the weavers haud about their gaun awa'! This is your hand o' write, you vagabone, that I paid ten shillings the half year

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\* Search.

for you to learn, instead o' which, ye thrawn gyte, ye sit down and fit yoursel' for hangin' or transportation! But I'll learn ye! Ye'll just tell me what a' this clishmaclaver, and writin', and Queen's letters, and durks and pistols mean, or, de'il ha'e me, but I'll half murther ye!"

Hew Tamson was now so wrought with passion (which was half voracious curiosity) that he fetched a cane from the corner, and stood over his son with his small pig's eyes fierce and red. It says much for the domination of O'Rhea that Tam, even at that moment of imminent castigation, feared him more than he feared his father. He stood obstinately silent. His father made the supple cane whistle in the air, and roared at him:

"Are ye for telling me, ye thrawn sorra, or are ye for this switch about your hurdies?"

Still Tam stood silent, and down came the cane.

"Oh, dinna, Hew!" cried the mother, now distracted with the imagination of the suffering of her first-born. "Dinna hurt him sae!"

But the swish of the strokes seemed only to nerve the father's arm with more vigour. He laid on till his son cried aloud:

"Dinna, father! dinna! I'll tell ye!"

And the unheroic Tam, with all his obstinacy and all his piracy gone out of him, squirmed and sobbed with pain and made a clean breast of all he knew.

"And so," said Hew, when he had heard his son out, "ye were gaun awa' too, ye ongrateful vagabone!"

"Oh, dinna misca' the laddie mair, Hew!" pleaded the mother. "He's but a laddie, and he's been led astray by them that should ken better—by they idle, orra gypes—Fergus O'Rhea and the Maister!"

"Od, gudewife! but there's mair in this than ye ha'e een for!" declared Tamson with a vindictive pursing of his mouth. "I'll gar the Maister smart for't now! He ca'd the tune, and he maun pay the piper! This is a Government business! This is nane o' your sma'-thread pliskies! This is just another Chartist conspiracy; some folk never ha'e enough o' onything! And the morn's morning, my lad,

ye'll gang afore ane o' the town bailies and tell him what ye ha'e tauld me, and maybe ye'll get aff as a kind o' Queen's Evidence, and no be hangit or transported as ye deserve to be!"

Tam was locked by his father into the garret for the night. Next morning early he was released and led to the Hargate Mill, into the presence of Bailie Lepine. He was now in an abject condition of terror. His father's vigorous application of the rod, and his relentless threat of transportation or the gallows, if anything were kept back, had reduced his mind to a nerveless, painful, palpitating jelly, so that he could not have kept anything back even if he would.

"Providence has willed it sae, Bailie," began Hew Tamson, "that I should be the ane to put my foot into a grand hornet's nest o' conspiracy. I ha'e been sair misdoubtin' the look o' things whiles ye hae been awa', Bailie. The weavers o' Ilkastane ha'e gane rank mad. They've been bringing me in the end o' their wabs—ill-woven trash maistly, and I promise ye the fines were flying; but fient a hair cared they. 'We dinna want nae mair wabs,' says they, 'we're gaun awa'!'"

"*Hein?*" cried the Bailie. "No more webs? Going away? To where, man?"

"That's the sticker, Bailie! But it's true enough. Nae mair work, and selling off by private bargain or public roup\* a' their bit sticks! Gosh be here, sir! There's been naething doing in Ilkastane for a fortnicht but kissing and courting and singing o' songs! Yesterday there was the de'il's ain ploy; marrying and giving in marriage, and dancin' and feasting as in the days afore the flood!"

"What flood? What do all this mean? What do it mean? *Hein?*" cried the Bailie, rapping his desk impatiently. "Do not say so many dam-long words of it!"

"It means this, Bailie," said the tall Tamson, bending towards his employer, and slowly dropping the portentous words in his ear: "Your trade's to be ruined now by the

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\* Roup—Auction.

weavers being ta'en awa' a'thegither! Ha'e ye forgotten the wark about the prices, and about the *whamleerie* thing? There's another Chairtist conspiracy and rebellion on foot. That's about the size o't! And wha's the heads o't but him they ca' the Maister o' Hutcheon, and that limb o' Sawtan, Fergus O'Rhea!"

"*Pif!* my good Tamson," said the Bailie. "Your head have the maggot! Your story is of the cock and of the bull! The Master of Hutcheon have a mission from the Queen. That is what it is! That is all!"

"Oh, ye've heard, then, sir, about this Queen's letter?" said Tamson, his pig's eyes burning into the question.

"Yes, I have heard; I have heard," answered the Bailie.

"And ye think I'm wrang? Weel, read that, sir." He handed the impudent letter addressed to the Master. The Bailie read it, and read it again, and then looked at Tamson, instinct with amazement and rage. "I can see that astonishes ye, sir, as it did me."

"Where come this from?" demanded the Bailie.

"That loon o' mine—wha has been drawn up to the neck into this business—wrote it out at the dictate o' Fergus O'Rhea, and put it in his pouch to copy out and post the day. By the mercy o' Providence I claught haud o't, and by logic mair forcible than moral suasion I got the haill story out o' him, for, though he's my ain son, he's a thrawn taed.—Speak up, ye nickem, and tell the Bailie how ye wrote for Fergus O'Rhea that fause Queen's letter in the bonny hand o' write I had to pay for your learning."

Tam answered, and the Bailie listened with close attention, his mind the while fiercely revolving the whole matter.

"Ay," commented Tamson, "what think ye o' that? The barefaced impudence o't! Taking Her Majesty's name in vain! I'm thinking she'll no hold him guiltless when she gets to hear o't! But, gosh! he's made a fine fule o' the Maister!—making him a king o' an outlandish place naebody ever heard o'!"

Thus he continued, suggesting his son's answer, and then eagerly and triumphantly passing his comment upon each



enormity as it was disclosed. And all the while the Bailie sat at his desk and only revealed his interest and agitation in the flashing of his fiery eye from father to son, and in frequently taking dips of ink as if he would write, and then only stabbing and staining his blotting-pad.

"Now tell the Bailie," said Tamson, "the real business that was at the back o't. . . . Ay. Ye see, Bailie! naething less than war and piracy on the high seas! A hanging business, as sure as death! And tell the Bailie o' the ship that's been bought—a brigantine! naething less!—and the guns and the cutlashes and a' the other things! . . . Ay, just think o' that! A' they things maun ha'e eaten up the feck \* o' that fortune the Maister cam' into! And now tell, ye nickem, o' this last thing o' yestreen. . . . Ay. D'ye see, Bailie? 'The Maister's aff this morning some gate or other, and whiles he's awa', this limb o' Sawtan, Fergus O'Rhea, means to be aff wi' the tide! It's a maitter for the fiscal and the sherra—isna't, Bailie? And there's nae time to be lost!"

"It is so," said the Bailie, rousing from his thoughts, tossing down his pen, and standing upon his feet. "There is no time! But this is my affair—my affair! Go to your work, Tamson! This letter I keep in my hand. I will be responsible."

"Surely, Bailie, surely," said Tamson. "And this on-grateful taed o' mine—what o' him?"

"Let him here stay. I will make him one—two questions," said the Bailie. "Do not fear; he will be safe."

And Tamson turned and said to his son:

"Mind ye behave yoursel', ye sorra, and speak up, and keep naething back, and it'll be the better for ye."

And so he went out of the office to his duty in the mill.

The Bailie had maintained his dignity before Tamson, but only by sheer force of silence; for had he once given way to his feelings, reserve, dignity, and honour would all have been swept away. His mind was a seething pot of humiliation and resentment. That large, expansive, per-

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\* Feck—the greater part.

spiring Mirabeau, the villain O'Rhea, had palpably taken him in, made use of him, and bluffed him; and that sham king, sham Master, sham aristocrat, sham everything, who had been befooled by O'Rhea, had actually imposed on him, a man of substance and consideration, an employer of labour and a town's magistrate! His resentment against Hutcheon was all the deeper now that he had treated the impostor with respect, and with homage and dread even, that he had invited him to his house, and had almost given him his daughter in marriage.

"The insolent!" he exclaimed, stamping up and down his floor; for he felt no such necessity of restraint before the son as he had felt before the father. "The nobody!—the sans-culotte!—he come to me, and he make me do things with his eye and his nose! But I will have him! The fool! the idiot! he spend all the money!—Have the O'Rhea spend much of the money, you think?" he suddenly demanded of Tam.

"Oh, thoosands and thoosands, Bailie!" answered the ready Tam.

"The jackass! The hombogue!—with the head in cloud! But I will show him! He enter my house, he eat my viand, and he drink my wine; and he—— *Enfin!* There is an end! We go to the Fiscal!"

"And I can tell ye something mair, Bailie," declared the traitor Tam, "that I ha'ena tauld my father: I ha'e to bid twa-three o' his chaps meet him at three o'clock sharp this afternoon at '*The Hole in the Wa*.'"

By "him" Tam of course meant O'Rhea, for he had not perceived that the line of the Bailie's resentment was directed against the Master. The Bailie looked at the young traitor and considered what he had said. He wondered to find that the voice and disposition of the young cock so closely resembled those of the old.

"I comprend!—I see!" said he. "It is good!—good! Now, M'sieu Tam—*entendez-vous!*—you take the message to the two-three chap, and you receive for your own pocket a one-pound, and you will not be punish; me, I promise. See, one-pound!" And he took from his pocket-book and

exhibited a dirty one-pound note. "If you do not, M'sieu Tam!—if you play the trick!—then you will be punish! you will be skelp! *Entendez-vous!* Now we go to the Fiscal!"

The two set off into the town together, and Tam, though in a Bailie's safe company, often glanced fearfully behind lest he might be pursued by the terrible O'Rhea. They went to the old Court-house in the Castlegate, attached to which were the police and other offices. There the Bailie found the Procurator-Fiscal, though it was still early, and to him he set forth his story. The Fiscal listened in astonishment, and though he could not believe that this conspiracy was, as the Bailie contended, a recrudescence of Chartism, yet he could have no doubt that both Hutcheon and O'Rhea were under great suspicion as old Chartist offenders, and it was plain that the expedition they had planned was treasonable, inasmuch as they had got arms together and proposed to carry certain of Her Majesty's subjects out of the country for an unknown, and probably an unlawful, purpose. It was arranged, therefore, that, as soon as the sheriff or his substitute could be got at, warrants should issue for the arrest of the persons of Fergus O'Rhea and of James Hutcheon.

In the meantime the traitor Tam was left in the safe but kindly custody of the law, to be made use of by the Fiscal.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### HOW O'RHEA FARED.

THAT proved an unfortunate day for O'Rhea. First of all, the weather was against him; for the air was terribly hot and close, tempting to inaction, and making for the gross O'Rhea the mere lifting of a hand, or raising of the voice, a considerable exertion, to be performed only in the sweat of the brow. But, in truth, the first touch of what he

regarded as ill-luck was that Kitty could in no wise be shaken off. His silence did not sadden her; and such harsh words as he ventured to address to her had not the effect of making her move farther from him. She regarded herself, it was evident, as inalienably bound to him, and she waited on his every step, and hung attentive on his every word. But the extraordinary thing was that she seemed as if she were already beginning to recover her original self; there was less of the light of frenzy in her eye, her manner was more composed, and memory and observation were plainly striving in her.

The next thing which troubled him was Hamish's failure to return according to his instruction. The touch of trouble and irritation became acute anxiety and doubt when he visited Hutcheon's close (followed by Kitty) to find the boy. The Master was gone on his journey, but the boy was nowhere to be seen, nor could anyone tell him what was become of him.

"Look here, Kitty," he said to his embarrassing companion, on the chance of her understanding him, "the loon—your own son!—is lost. It would better set you to find him than to bide at my heel like a shepherd's dog."

Her answer surprised and troubled him.

"I ha'e neither man nor woman bairn that I ken o'. I ha'e nane but you, and ye're my man. Ye ha'e been kind, kind to me—kinder than words can say!—and I'll no leave ye for onybody! 'Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge.' Thus saith the Lord."

With a shrug and snigger he ceased trying to persuade her. He conceived it would be quite easy to give her the slip at the necessary moment.

When they had returned to his shanty he set her to pack his "duds" into a sea-chest which he had bought, but which he had no intention of taking with him on board. He had there lodged a sufficient outfit for himself. While she was kneeling thus occupied over the chest, he softly shut the door upon her, stole out of the shanty on tip-toe, and sped away down the burnside. He was beginning to think himself securely off—at length disembarrassed of his irksome

wife—when he heard the light patter of steps, and, glancing behind him, there was Kitty a few yards in his rear. He continued, as if he were not aware of her neighbourhood, and still he heard her light footfall, neither coming nearer nor falling behind; and still as he went he perspired in the terrible heat, and mopped his forehead, while (he thought of it with a ferocious grudge) he had no doubt she followed cool and dry. In the busier part of the town he ceased to hear her, but still he was certain she was steadily following; for, though he did not look behind, he saw in the faces of passengers on the other side of the way that his daft wife was in her place; and still he toiled sweating on, raging inwardly at her and the heat, and hearing townsfolk say, as they passed him, “Ay, there’s thunder in the air,” or “There’ll be a storm afore nicht.” Passing by unfrequented lanes, in the rear of shipbuilding yards to the outer harbour, where the ship was now moored ready for sailing, he again heard her footsteps behind, and the sound began to affect his nerves. He was of a superstitious turn, and the even, persistent step appealed to him as the dogging of a vengeful spirit, content patiently to bide its time, when it would leap on his back and ride him to his doom. He shuddered, and involuntarily he looked behind; certainly Kitty followed him, and no other. He tried to reassure himself, but the strength of his superstitious feeling was shown in his remark to himself when he slipped down the gangway on shipboard:

“We’ll see if water won’t turn her off.”

Kitty did not follow him on board. She sat down, however, on the quay, in the shadow of a shed, and waited for his reappearance; and he, when he had accomplished his business on board, was secretly rowed away from the remoter side of the ship and landed in the inner harbour.

And Kitty still waited and waited, shaded from the heat—with what anxious and vague fumbling after the truth of her condition and circumstances who may say? She herself could never tell, except that observation and recollection woke shrewdly up with the appearance of a *posse* of police-constables, who came suddenly from behind the shed and made swiftly for the gangway of the ship. The sight of

them at once swept back her wandering thoughts to the Chartists and their dread of arrest by the men in blue. Acute fear and trembling seized her, so that when she heard the voices of two policemen standing near—left, doubtless, as a reserve on the lookout—she remained rooted to her seat, powerless with terror, but her hearing so awake that she felt as if she were all one buzzing, throbbing ear.

"Isna this Fergus O'Rhea," said the one to the other, "the Chartist chield we used to hear o'?"

"The identical same, I believe," said the other. "They're going on to nab him, and twa-three mair, at '*The Hole in the Wa*.' 'Od, he'll catch it this time, or I'm mista'en! The Sherra's ta'en the matter up himsel'!"

These words provoked in her one clear effort of memory and vision. She was back in the Chartist terror of eight years ago. The Chartists were in danger; most of all Fergus O'Rhea, the most precious of men, her accepted lover, and he was on the point of arrest! The quick desire to save him reanimated her with strength and foresight. Like a withered leaf in a high wind she whisked round the corner of the shed out of sight of the policemen, and went skimming away back towards the town.

"'*The Hole in the Wa*!' '*The Hole in the Wa*!'!" she continued to whisper fiercely to herself as she sped along, whipping memory to do its work. "Oh, whaur's '*The Hole in the Wa*!'!" Then gradually and easily, as on the demand of excitement there comes back to us the dialect and tones of our youth, there broke on Kitty a vision of the streets and wynds of the town which had once been familiar, and she saw clearly her goal, against the foot of the precipitous castle-rock—the little dram-shop with red blinds which was known as "*The Hole in the Wa*.'"

She swept into the open passage of the little tavern, tried a door on the left. The room was empty; dashed to a door on the right, and found herself facing a number of sailors and soldiers, all seated about a table, sprawling in the heat, and turned eagerly towards one who sat at the end—her "man"—with his arms spread in his favourite fashion, speaking with insistent forefinger!

"Fergus O'Rhea! Fergus O'Rhea! Is Fergus O'Rhea here?" she cried, and then paused for breath.

"Well, what the devil do you want with me now?" demanded he at the head of the table, bringing down his great fist with a bang that made the dram-glasses jingle.

It perplexed her to understand how her "man" and Fergus O'Rhea were one and the same; but her perplexity was swallowed up in the immediate anxiety.

"The polis is after ye!" she said in pants. "You and twa-three mair's to be nabbed here, at '*The Hole in the Wa'*!'"

"What daft story's that?" cried O'Rhea, his great face livid, and his sensual lips shot out with fury. "Who told you that?"

"I heard them say't mysel'!" answered Kitty. "The twa men in blue! And the rest o' them's on your ship! And oh, but they garred me grue!"

O'Rhea and his companions looked on each other in fear and suspicion. They were within an ace of panic, for each doubted the others, none knew on what charge the police should seek them, and yet all had consciences which accused them of unlawful and evil designs. The soldiers were full of the intention of deserting their regiment, and the sailors of the prospect of piracy on distant seas, while O'Rhea himself, conscious of being an outlawed Chartist, and doubtful of the legality of fitting out an armed ship, was keenly aware that if he were hindered from sailing away in the ship that night he would have to reckon with an outraged and angry master. At that critical moment O'Rhea kept his head.

"Steady, boys!" he cried, noting a pervasive flutter as if for escape. "If anybody is wanted it's me. And if it's true that the ship is seized, then it's a pretty serious business. But we've gone too far on the way of fortune to turn back, danime! for all the peelers in Inverdoon!"

"Whisht!" cried Kitty, inclining her ear to the door.

"We must make our arrangements at once," continued O'Rhea, "in case they come to ask for me. It's best to be on the safe side of a door, and the safe side's the outside.

So this meeting is adjourned, to be resumed at twelve to-night"—he leaned forward and spoke in a low whisper—"at the water-corner of Strang's shipyard; and we'll hoist our top-sails and have our ship out yet on the run of the ebb, or my name's not Fergus O'Rhea! Now, hook it! I wait here to know if I'm really wanted, and what for."

The door was opened, and the company rose to pass out. Two or three had already got into the passage, when they pressed back upon those urging them forward.

"Get in, ye beggars!" they cried with scared faces. "Get in! The peelers are here!"

All crowded back into the room, and stood dismayed but grim. They were desperate ruffians, red-coats and tarry-breeks who had faced danger often, who had a sense of discipline, but who required a lead.

"This '*Hole in the Wa*' is naething but a rat-trap!" said one of the sailors.

"There's the window!" said a soldier. "I've used it mony a time! If ye're not ower thick ye can squeeze atween the house and the rock down into the gutter, and get out into the neist close!"

"Quick, then!" said O'Rhea. "The window be it; though I doubt I'm too thick to use it. I'll keep the door fast. And strike up, ye beggars! strike up '*We're wearin' awa*' to the Land o' the Leal!' so that the clatter o' your brogues as ye get through the window mayna be heard!" At that there was a snigger of approval from the company. "Kitty, you limmer!" he cried, "start the tune. You used to know it well enough!"

Kitty obediently raised the melancholy song, in which all the company joined in a low voice and according to their ability, and one by one clambered out at the little window. Scarce half the company had thus departed when there sounded a heavy knocking at the door. On that authoritative demand for attention those remaining instinctively turned and paused in their singing.

"Sing, ye beggars!" said O'Rhea. "We mustn't be supposed to hear that. Get out with ye!"

The singing had been so managed that, as the company



became fewer, those left raised the pitch and volume of their voices, to the intent that anyone without should hardly tell whether the number of singers were growing less or no, until there remained but two or three besides Kitty and O'Rhea, when any attempt to disguise their decrease was unavailing. Then, as if the knocking at the door had been heard for the first time, the singing ceased.

"Who is there?" demanded O'Rhea.

"Open," was the answer, "in the Queen's name!"

"What does the Queen want here?" demanded O'Rhea.

"You are ordered to open," was the answer. "That's enough for you to begin with."

O'Rhea saw the last man vanish over the window-sill, and then he whispered to Kitty, "The window's not for me. I'm too big. I must get away by the door, but you must help me. When I make a dash, hang on to the coat-tails of as many as you can. And, Kitty, you've been a good girl, and, as sure as God made me, you and the boy shall go with me! Get home to Ilkastane as fast as you can, and I'll meet you there to-night."

The impatient knocking was repeated. "Now," demanded a voice, "are you going to open, or no?"

O'Rhea undid the bolts and flung the door wide.

"Now," he demanded, standing well back into the middle of the room, and speaking with a flourish of bravado, "what's this to-do about? Can't a few friends be left in peace, because they happen to be singing and daffing over a dram?"

Three men in police uniform pressed in and looked about in surprise.

"My friends didn't like the noise you made," said O'Rhea with a snigger, "so they hooked it by the back door," and he pointed to the open window.

The three officers looked with wonder on the big man facing them. He seemed to be in the greatest glee, though his perspiration was almost blinding him.

"Ye're Fergus O'Rhea, I'm thinking," said the foremost, looking on him with threatening eye, while the other two stepped to the window.

"I am," said O'Rhea. "What then?"

The officer uttered his set form of words signifying that he held a warrant from the sheriff for the arrest of Fergus O'Rhea; and he brandished a folded paper.

"On what charge?" demanded O'Rhea. "I believe you're bound to answer me that!"

"Treason against Her Majesty," answered the officer, "in that you have——"

He was about to open the paper to assure himself of the form of words, when O'Rhea leapt at him and overturned him, while Kitty did better than hang on to the coat-tails of the other two. She sprang on them and embraced them closely with an arm about each neck, and O'Rhea shot out through the open door, out into the passage, and so into the street, overthrowing or sweeping aside the three or four persons he encountered. He shot across the narrow way and disappeared in the mouth of a close, followed by mingled cries of fury and admiration.

He had escaped; for it was idle to seek to pursue him (though two policemen made a feint of following) into the devious warren of closes and passages, and among the half-criminal and wholly friendly population which had swallowed him up. The exasperated officers, having missed all those for whose arrest they had arranged, seized upon the daft Kitty and haled her off on suspicion.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### THE MASTER IS EXAMINED.

MEANWHILE, what of the Master?

He was up very early to catch the first train to the south, about six o'clock; indeed, he had scarcely slept all night because of the excitement of anticipation, for a journey was a very rare experience, and rarer still was a meeting with a

sweetheart at the end. When he was dressing, he noticed that Hamish lay wide awake with his eyes on him. Instantly he paused.

"I hadna thought o' that," said he. "What am I to do wi' you, laddie?"

"Whaur are ye gaun, Maister?" asked the boy, with open, anxious eyes.

"I'm going in the train to Embro'," answered the Master, "wi' young Maister Lepine, to bring his sister hame. I'll be away till the morn's evening, and I think ye'd better go and get used to your new-found father."

Then the boy astonished the Master by an outburst of hysterical passion.

"I winna, Maister—I winna!" he cried. "I'd rayther run awa'! What for did ye gi'e me a father and mither! I dinna want a father and mither! I want to be your loon! I'll let ye ha'e her and marry her—ye're no ower auld!—but let me be your loon!"

The Master considered the boy a moment—and then he thought he understood and saw to the bottom of a child's unfathomed feeling.

"Weel," he murmured, "Nature's a queer, contrary thing! Ow! greeting? Oh, fie! A big chield like you, that can think o' marrying, mustna greet! So ye dinna want to go to your father? Weel, ye'd better go to the house by the Moss and bide there till I come for ye. Now up wi' ye, and get your parritch, and then aff up the Stocket Road."

And that was how it came to pass that Hamish was not to be found when O'Rhea sought him.

In a little while the Master was journeying south in the company of George Lepine; and he was luxuriating in the freshness of the morning air, and in frequent glimpses of the sea—that sea over which he hoped to sail so soon—at the very hour when the Bailie was furiously arranging for the ruin of all his hopes!

The day was still young when he stood in a house in Edinburgh new town in the presence of his sweetheart—his Aimée, who, fresh and sweet and blushing as a June rose, jumped of her own accord into his arms and kissed him, and

whom he held for an instant with the surpassing delight of recovered possession. She and Elsie M'Cree were quite ready to travel, for—she exhibited a telegram from her father—she had been ordered to have everything ready to set out. George looked with curiosity and suspicion, and the Master with something like awe—for to him a telegram was an unfamiliar document)—on the Bailie's message. Its terms were explicit; it announced to Aimée that George and the Master would arrive to bring her home, and it requested them all to return at once, because it was of the greatest importance they should be back that day. None had any objection to satisfy the Bailie's request, the Master least of all; for he secretly declared to his love, "I didna come to see 'Embro', but to find you; ye're more than Embro', and Scotland, and the world to me." So, after eating a morsel of food, they set out on their return to Inverdoon.

How can a mere dealer in prose suggest the delight of that return journey? Had he even the tongue of an angel to dictate, or the pen of a poet to write, how could he express the sublimity, the intoxication of warm joy which surged through the Master's innocent being and raised him to a hitherto unconceived heaven of bliss? And with the shy ecstasy and trust which his sweetheart manifested, surely it is not for any strange man to meddle.

The four had a compartment to themselves, and either pair sat in a corner, with but a yard's space between, yet each in its own world—the world which two souls and bodies in love spin for themselves, as some insects spin their cocoons.

"My dawtie," said the Master, "how I have yearned and yearned for your sweet company, I cannot tell ye! Ye ha' been lang awa'," said he simply, "and I've never had a real sweetheart but you."

"You dear, foolish man!" murmured Aimée.

"And your father has troubled me with humming and ha'ing about our marriage, and about your going away wi' me. Tell me now, my dear, tell me out plain and clear, are ye feared to go with me far over the sea to Andaman?"

"I only fear, my dear Master——"

"But *ye* mustna call me that!" he exclaimed. "I'm not 'Master' to you! I would be but your man, and your trusted fiere."

"You are my dear Master!" said she, with a pretty wilfulness. "I will say it! I like it! Oh, *mon ami*, it is after I have not seen you for a long time, and when I have seen other men, that I know how good and noble and beautiful you are!"

"But *ye* mustna say that! It's just rank idolatry!" But she merely smiled up at him and plucked his beard; and he murmured, "God is gey good to me! But *ye* were going to say?"

"I was going to say, my dear Master, that when I am alone I am just as if walking on the top of a wall! Oh, it is not nice! I fear this side and that side! But when I am with you, and you hold my foolish little hand with your strong one—strong and brown! strong and brown!—that has worked so much for your poor folk, that has made so many things, and is so kind!—oh, so kind!—then I fear nothing, *mon ami*, and I go anywhere, holding your hand always!"

The Master could say nothing to that. He could but stroke and caress the little trusting hand, while a lump swelled in his throat and tears dimmed his eyes, and murmur, when he had found a measure of voice, "Ye just owerwhelm me wi' your goodness!"

Thus they continued wrapt close in loving converse; and as they rattled on to Inverdoon, no kind of hint came of what awaited them there, or of all that would happen ere the sun went down. As they neared the town the air came through the open windows in hot gusts, as if in panting breaths from a fiery furnace distant but vast, and thunder muttered miles away, as if a battle were in progress. But these things moved them not at all. They still babbled and dreamed of the future in close company, until they rattled across the river and swept into the station of Inverdoon.

Then came a change like a thunderbolt.

The Master had but stepped from the train to the platform when a police-officer touched his arm.

"You are, I think, James Hutcheon, of Ilkastane?"

"I am," answered the Master.

"I have," said the officer, "a warrant for your arrest in the Queen's name."

"Warrant? Arrest? The Queen?" murmured the Master in amazement. "But what's the meaning o' this, sirs?" He glanced about him; he was cut off from his companions by a circle of policemen. His mind and senses were in a mad whirl. He saw Aimée make a dash forward to reach his side; heard the Bailie's voice cry, "Go not near that man! I command you, girl!" and saw him stand a little way off, looking pale and angry. His heart surged with resentment as he turned again to the officer, and said, "I'd like fine to know what for I'm arrested."

There was a dangerous light in his eye, which tempted the officer to say hurriedly:

"It will be best to come your ways quietly, Mr. Hutcheon. The charge set down is treason-felony, but the Fiscal and the Sherra'll inform ye all about it. It's late in the day, but they're good enough to be set waiting for you—they look upon the case as important enough for that—and there's nae doubt they'll tak' a'thing into *avisandum* in their pre-cognition."

"Lead on, then," said the Master, "and have done wi't, for I have a hantle to do."

He said that to himself as much as to the officer. For, while his thought was whirling in wonder as to the meaning of this, and in suspicion as to the Bailie's conduct, he insisted to himself that the whole matter was but a puzzling and painful interlude which must be speedily got over that he might pass on to the accomplishment of things of real moment. Vaguely he was conscious of the Bailie's attempt to reassure his family that this was only a harmless inquiry, and of George Lepinc's obstinate declaration that he and his sister would at least follow and see what came of it; and then he was marched out of the station encompassed by four officers. Arrived outside, he was surprised to ob-

serve a large concourse of people, and amazed to discover from the set of their eyes and the buzz that greeted his appearance that he himself was the centre of curiosity. He wondered to note among them, moreover, some of his own Ilkastane folk, who looked dark and dour, while the townsfolk shouted and laughed, or boo'd and hissed. There was a cab in waiting, into which he was urged, in the company of the officer who arrested him, and two policemen; and resentment again surged in him with astonishment, when, as he was driven off, he heard someone strike up the song, "Wha the de'il ha'e we gotten for a king!"

The cab drew up at a side door of the old court-house, and he was straightway conducted into a private room and found himself in the presence of three serious men, who looked upon him shrewdly. These, he presently learned, were the Sheriff-Substitute, the Procurator-Fiscal, and a clerk, who were waiting to take what is called in Scots law "the Precognition"—to make, that is to say, a private and preliminary examination as to whether there is ground for prosecuting the charge upon which a person is arrested. There were present only these important officials of the law, himself, and the officers who conducted him; and the gloom and silence of that sombre, ancient, oak-panelled chamber impressed him more with misgiving than would have an open, crowded court.

The Sheriff-Substitute sat at the head of the table, calm, silent, and attentive, while the Procurator-Fiscal stood with certain papers in his hand, and began the examination of the Master, and the clerk was ready with his pen to make notes for the Declaration. First, the Procurator-Fiscal formally asked the Master if he was named James Hutcheon.

"That am I," answered the Master; "and if it please ye, sirs, I'd like to hear whatna presence I am in and what's the charge against me."

The Fiscal declared in whose presence he was, and set forth the charge, namely, that he had treasonably conspired to take out of the country certain of Her Majesty's subjects for an unlawful purpose, and for the same purpose had

fitted out a ship in warlike fashion. That was the purport of the charge; and he was formally challenged to say aught that he would in reply to it, on the full understanding (of which he was duly warned and admonished) that his Declaration would be taken down by the clerk, and would form part of any Indictment that might finally be made against him.

"I am free to tell ye, sirs," answered the Master, "that ye must have made—or that your informants ha'e made—some daft mistake; for all that I have done I have done by the express order o' the Queen herself, with as great secrecy and dispatch as I could contrive, and as Her Majesty commanded. And as for the arming o' the ship, there's but a cutlash and a musket or twa, and maybe a brass popgun, for protection's sake on a long voyage. I think that's all I have to say about it." The Sheriff-Substitute demanded if he did not know that the ship was really furnished with as many arms and guns as would set up one of Her Majesty's own men-o'-war. "No," replied the Master, with some misgiving, "I did not know that."

The two men of law exchanged glances, and the Fiscal asked in what form the Queen's orders were conveyed.

"In a gey precise, official letter," answered the Master; "and here it is, if ye must see it."

The Fiscal received the precious document from Hutcheon's hand, and he and the Sheriff-Substitute together bent over it, and read it, and conversed concerning it in low tones, and with lifted eyebrows and smiling lips. When the Fiscal stood upright, the Master extended his hand to receive his letter back.

"You must leave this with us for the present, if you please, Mr. Hutcheon," said the Fiscal. "But do you really mean to say, Mr. Hutcheon, that it never came into your mind to ask if this document were a forgery?"

"Forgery? What for should I think sic a paper a forgery?" he asked.

His voice sounded brave enough, but he turned pale to the lips. It was absolutely the first time for him that the document—the splendid charter of Ilkastane liberties—had



been doubted. He did not yet doubt its authenticity himself, but he saw they doubted, and he understood, moreover, from their smiles that they were inclined to pity his credulity; and pity is a form of sympathy which a man like the Master most passionately resents.

"What for," retorted the Sheriff-Substitute, speaking with a note of impatience, "should you think it genuine? Had you any call to expect Her Majesty to communicate in that way with you?"

Again the Master was conscious of having been dealt a bewildering blow. But he recovered himself, and his mind rose superior to these insinuations of doubt.

"I think, gentlemen," said he with quiet dignity, "ye dinna rightly know who I am. The full name and title ha'e been in abeyance since the troubles o' the Forty-five; I am commonly called the Master o' Hutcheon, but I am truly the Lord Hutcheon o' that ilk. Doubtless Her Majesty, being the fountain or well-head o' honour, minds on all her auld nobility and baronage, and would ken who I was whenever I wrote to her, as I did, anent the poortith and oppression o' the Ilkastane weavers, to spier for her leave to take them to the island o' Andaman. And so, ye understand, that," said he, pointing to the paper still in the Fiscal's hand, "appears to me the most seemly and natural, and gracious and queen-like answer in the world."

Again the two men of law exchanged glances, as who should say, "What *is* to be made of this mad business?"

"That is a most extraordinary story, Mr. Hutcheon," said the Fiscal.

Both he and his colleague looked in pity on the Master, respectful pity enough, but such pity as the Master could not endure.

"It may seem a strange thing to you, gentlemen," he broke forth, "wha ha'e been used only to the quillots and quodlibets o' the law! I ha'e no acquaintance with the causeys o' the town or the riddle-me-rees o' the Court-house. I have 'bode aye among my own poor folk, and to me it seems just as fine and natural as wakening in the morning!

But, since we're at it, I'll be glad if ye'll tell me what reasons *ye* ha'e for thinking that paper a forgery."

"Apart from *à priori* reasons, sir," said the Sheriff-Substitute, promptly, "which do not seem to appeal to you, we have conclusive evidence that that paper is a forgery; that it is of the nature of what is called a practical joke; that your letter never went to the Queen, and that consequently the Queen never wrote to you."

"If that is so——" murmured the Master.

He could say no more. He appeared so overwhelmed and bewildered with wonder and distress that the Sheriff-Substitute continued with impatience:

"To be plain with you, Mr. Hutcheon, you are either the most credulous of men, or there is more in this than we have yet got at. Do you know a person named Fergus O'Rhea?"

"I do," answered the Master. "He has been my right hand in this business."

"And do you know he is an outlawed Chartist?"

"I do."

"Do you think it is befitting a gentleman of your origins should be associated with such a man?"

"What for no?" said the Master. "My own brother was an outlawed Chartist, and I was almost ane myself."

"Do you know a youth named Thomas Tamson?"

"Do you mean Hew's loon?"

"Probably. Was he an assistant of yours?"

The Master shook his head. Uncertainty was invading him.

"No to my knowledge," said he.

"You seem to have trusted far too much, Mr. Hutcheon, to that man O'Rhea," put in the Procurator-Fiscal. "Read that; it was intended to come into your hand."

He gave him the letter which O'Rhea had dictated to Tam Tamson.

The Master read, and flushed with sudden fire, and then turned deadly pale; but it was the white heat of rage that consumed him. He read the letter a second time, and handed it back to the Fiscal.

"I see now ! I see !" he said.

"Do you recognise the writing?" asked the Fiscal.

"No," answered the Master ; "but I can hear in it the voice of Fergus O'Rhea ! Has he got off with the ship?" he suddenly demanded.

"No," answered the Fiscal, "we have taken care of that. The ship is under arrest—as he would be, too, but he has as yet evaded the officers."

The Master looked dazed. All his heaven and earth seemed rushing to ruin about him. He put his hand absently to his forehead, and then to his beard ; his action was eloquent of the oppression of perplexity, and of the desire to be rid of it.

"We are exceedingly sorry for you, Mr. Hutcheon," said the Sheriff-Substitute.

"Oh, there's no need to be sorry for me, sirs," interrupted the Master. "Be sorry rather for the poor folk that'll be broken-hearted and ruined if this business is no carried through !"

"And I am sorry," continued the Sheriff-Substitute, "I cannot immediately discharge you. You must wait for the arrest of the man O'Rhea. But if I am not mistaken, you'll be safer in our keeping than if you were freely making your way home to Ilkastane. Do you hear that?"

Without there was a growling and muttering and rumbling, which might have been the voices of a great concourse of people, or the sound of thunder. But a flash of lightning illumined the sombre chamber, and the Master thought it was thunder he heard.

"It's no a fire-flaught," said he, "or a brash o' thunder, or a downpour would ever keep me off the road, sirs."

The formality of reading and signing the Declaration being then gone through, the Fiscal made a sign to the police-officers, and the Master was led out, scarcely aware that he was being conducted to prison.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## THE HOUSE ON THE MOSS.

THE side door of the Court-house, by which the Master was led out, opened into a narrow street, or rather lane, and a few paces off, at an elbow where the lane turned at right angles, was the entrance to the ordinary prison. When he appeared descending the steps between his guards, he was greeted with a roar of derision and rage by a ragged, reckless crowd that surged in the High Street in front of the Court-house and dribbled into the lane. As soon as it was known that the prisoner was come out, the crowd poured into the lane, sweeping the Master and his guards before it, on to the door of the prison, with hoarse, savage cries of "See till him! Ruined the weavers, he has—lock and stock! Him a king! Hoo! the muckle gype!" Stones hurtled and crashed. One stone struck the Master on the back and another on the cheek, making the blood flow. He turned, and recognised with pain and sorrow the lowering faces of some of his Ilkastane folk. But "No, no; I will not believe they did it!" he declared to himself.

He and his guards had reached the elbow in which was situated the prison door, when there suddenly came a change in the current of the crowd. Those who had been behind were pushed and crushed backward with a new impulse, and Hutcheon and his guards were furiously set upon by a fresh set of violent ruffians. At least, Hutcheon thought he was set upon, and he struggled to release himself.

"Let-a-be!" a familiar voice panted in his ear. "Gi'e leg-bail, Maister, and aff wi' ye! The black villain O'Rhea is in Ilkastane!"

The Master recognised the voice and person of the faithful Steven; and then, his vision being assured, he saw that Steven and the stalwart ex-soldier, Donald M'Kay, were hanging on to his guards, and he did not need the renewed urgency of Steven's cry, "Run, Maister! run!" to take

advantage of his sudden freedom. The mere hint of the necessity for action was enough to set his blood a-tingle and his wits to work. He shot away down the bend of the lane. He was about to emerge from it upon another street, when the crowd met him, sweeping round from the High Street, as if aware of his escape, and resolved to intercept it. On seeing him they rushed forward with a roar, and he doubled back a little way upon his steps and shot into a close which seemed to open to receive him. His progress in the narrow and unfamiliar way was uncertain, and he was surprised that no one pursued him, that not even the voice of the raging mob came to his ears. Had he seen and heard the reason, it would have filled his soul with confidence and made his heart sing for joy.

The ragged, mouthing mob was kept back by a woman. From Heaven knows where, a little lady, bright and beautiful as a bird, but fierce as a tigress robbed of her whelps, had flashed into the front and had dared them to come a step further.

"For what do you rage at him so?" she cried. "He is a noble gentleman! You!—you are beasts and brutes! He have worked for you!—he have lived poor for you!—he have given you his money!—to you, or else to those like you! And you rage at him!—you stone him!—you make him bleed! He is alone the good man in all your stupid, hard, hard town, and you treat him so! Oh, you *canaille*! You are not men! He is a noble gentleman! You!—oh, you are brutes, beasts! Go back! Go home!"

The fury and beauty of the brilliant little lady gave the crowd pause; they were rough, but they were not without good-nature. They inquired of each other who she was, and one and another said, "Wha ever she is, she's a bonny ane and plucky ane!" At length someone said, "She's Bailie Lippen's dochter," and at mention of the Bailie's name the crowd began sullenly to retire. Presently she was found by her brother and Elsie M'Cree.

"He must have got off by now," said George. "So we had better go home."

"I will go home, George," said his sister, "only if he has

gone home! And when we arrive at Ilkastane you will make sure that he is safe."

The Master had escaped the immediate clutch of the law and the assault of the mob. He knew the town well enough to get on the way to Ilkastane by the least frequented streets; and he swung along at a great pace, in a lather of heat. As he neared Ilkastane, the storm, which had been gathering sulkily and muttering the whole day, broke in a deluge of rain. He merely buttoned his coat and drew his bonnet over his brows, and pressed forward with greater speed.

Why did he thus press forward to Ilkastane as to a goal? It was not because, like a beast of the chase, he sought his lair for rest and concealment. Neither shelter nor concealment was in all his desire. He was furiously urging himself forward, he scarcely knew why. He merely was aware that he had no thought of yielding to the apparent ruin that had been wrought in his designs. He meant to do something, he knew not what, except that he was resolved first of all to stand face to face with the villain O'Rhea. The spirit of his fighting forbears was slowly being roused in him, and would surely lead him to do things that might surprise his past self; but the immediate end to which it was urging him was vengeance on the traitor.

The rain poured, the lightning flashed, and the thunder hurtled overhead like the emptying of gigantic loads of stone; and still he marched on, searching himself with many fiery thoughts. He had been blind; he had been a fool; he had spent himself, and his brother's money, in the cause of his people, and they had risen against him, and in their furious ingratitude had cast stones at him; but no, he would not blame them, poor things! for, if no more was to be heard of Andaman, then for them the future was only black, hopeless night; and oh, he had trusted far too much to O'Rhea, and had abandoned himself too much to idle dreams of true love, and visions of perfect prosperity. Now—his heart fell with the weight and coldness of lead—all was to begin over again! Even his letter to the Queen

had not gone! Oh, that God Almighty would intervene in the righteous cause! But on! It would still be folly to let reflection eat out the heart of action.

He reached Ilkastane, and walked right on into O'Rhea's shanty. The door was open, and in the passage he came upon Kitty sitting on a stool with her head covered, and rocking herself to and fro in terror of the storm.

"Oh, the wrath o' God!" she moaned. "The wrath o' God! The terrible wrath o' God upon miserable Ilkastane sinners!"

"Where is he?" demanded the Master. She did not heed him. He shook her impatiently. "Come, Kitty woman, whaur's your man? Whaur's O'Rhea?"

She answered without uncovering her head.

"Oh, him and me and a' the bonny Chartist lads are to be aff in a gran' ship the night! And he's just awa' out a bit some gate to fin' the little loon he's sae ta'en up wi'! . . . I see naething in him mysel'!"

The Master scarcely heard her last words. He was out of the shanty, and up the burnside, taking the only way to the house on the Moss.

The first burst of fury of the storm had passed, passed over Ilkastane and Inverdoon to the sea, but all things waited as in hushed suspense for its renewal. The Master strode on in the middle of the road, urged by two insistent, hot desires—to come face to face with O'Rhea as soon as might be, and to take the boy from him—and the silent, dripping trees and bushes seemed to listen and wonder as he went by. Rattling quarry-carts passed him, and clay-soiled quarry-men returning from work, with their coats and cans slung over their shoulders, gave him "good-e'en" and looked with suspicion on his soaked, disordered clothes and his bleeding cheek; but he held on without heeding them. As he passed through Freedom, gusts of wind swept down and blew the rushes and the water a livid white under the lowering sky. On he passed into the way through the wood of dark, eerie-sounding firs. He was in the midst of the wood when the storm swept down again with a crash and a roar. The firs tossed, and soughed and moaned, and the

streaming maiden-hair foliage of the silver birks was blown and torn. Soon the burn in the hollow became a "spate," foaming and raging over bank and linn; and the Master was so drenched that his boots squelched as he walked. It was all so dark and hideous in the wood, that there was danger of losing the way; and he peered anxiously on this side and on that, so that no creature might pass unrecognised; and still the lightning flashed, the thunder burst, and the rain poured, and hissed, and roared.

He was out of the wood at length, and on the open moss,\* where the storm swept on him with such fury that he could do no more for a minute than merely stand up against it. With an effort he made headway, but his going had to be exceedingly careful; for he was almost as sore bested as was Christian in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. The darkness caused by the storm and the streaming atmosphere kept him from clearly seeing the way; and he knew that on the one hand lay a very deep ditch, and on the other dangerous quags—such quags as looked like firm turf, but which had often so completely swallowed up men and beasts that they had never been seen again. And it was so that, as he went on, when he lifted up his foot to go forward, he oftentimes knew not where or upon what he should set it next.

Still he pressed on, and the great desolate moss opened out vaguely under the dissolving firmament, showing dark peat, white cotton weeds like specks of light, and sullen phosphorescent pools as far as the eye could penetrate; and still the lightning flashed, the thunder rolled and crashed, and the rain poured with vicious hiss. At length a dull glow appeared, and he stumbled directly towards it, with his feet now tripping in tough heather roots, and now sinking in soft, squaggy spots—on, till he discovered that the glow was that of a peat-fire shining through the open door of the house he sought.

The Master lingered an instant on the threshold, noted a coat steaming over the back of a chair on one side of the fire, the boy Hamish a little way off on the other side,

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\* Moor, or, more commonly, bog.



seated on the bare earthen floor crying, and O'Rhea in his shirt-sleeves sprawling abroad on the table well away from the heat. There was no one else to be seen, and O'Rhea was speaking in a coaxing voice.

"Come, come, sonnie," he said, "a brave young sailor like you greeting! In an hour or two it'll be 'Heave and a-wash,' and away we sail, and you'll be as merry as a grig!" He looked at his watch. "In half an hour we must be out of this, storm or no!"

"Ye'll have to reckon wi' me first," said the Master, stepping forward.

With lip hanging in astonishment, O'Rhea stared a moment on the drenched figure and the blood-stained cheek, which all the rain had not been able to wash clean, and then he murmured :

"Hutcheon!"

"Ay," said the Master, "that same. The Hutcheon ye have beflummed and befooled!"

O'Rhea's complexion turned grey beneath his extensive ruddiness, but he stood up and faced the Master, and looked as helpless, harmless, and innocent as can be imagined.

"What's the meaning of this, Hutcheon? What have I done?" He extended his hands as if calling him to witness that they were clean; but his restless eyes showed his adroit wits were at work to find a plausible explanation of their meeting thus. "Ah, I see," he cried, and he slapped his leg, "this is the Bailie's doing! He has got the ship arrested; he has tried to get me arrested; and I suppose he has brought you back to get you arrested too!" The Master's steady gaze wavered a little. Certainly it was true that the Bailie's order had brought him back a day earlier than had first been arranged. O'Rhea perceived his advantage, and rashly urged it. He took a step forward and laid his fingers on the Master's arm, persuasively saying, "Just let's talk this over, Hutcheon, and try to understand it."

But the Master drew away from his touch; and his hand flew out and smote the traitor a sounding smack on the cheek.

"Keep your hands off me!" he said. "Fergus they ca' ye, but Judas should be your name!"

O'Rhea reeled under the force and unexpectedness of the blow. He leaned one hand on the table, and gasped under his breath:

"By God, you'll repent this! By God, you will!" And even while he stood, the fierce sting of the Master's fingers rose upon his cheek in hideous weals.

"Let's have done wi' your lies!" said the Master. "I know them all!—all! And into the pit ye digged for me ye're going to fall yourself! And see to the righteousness o't!" he cried, pointing to the terrified boy. "*He* comes o' your treachery to a woman, and it's befitting that your being here to seek *him* should end in your delivery into my hands! And now you're to come wi' me, and answer for the whole business afore the Sherra!"

"Royal as ever, Hutcheon!" sneered O'Rhea. "Royal as ever! By G—d! what a king you would make! But may I humbly inquire how your Majesty would propose to make me go with you, in case I'm not inclined?"

"Bring me that hank o' plough line that's ahint ye, laddie," he said to Hamish. Hamish brought the rope with alacrity at the Master's word, skirting wide of O'Rhea the while; and O'Rhea, seeing him, muttered, "D—n the little sorning cub!" "Now," continued the Master, "ye're to be tied up wi' this, and when the gude-man comes home ye'll be driven into the town like a swine to the flesher!"

"So be it!" said O'Rhea, standing erect on his feet, and looking a most formidable tower of strength. He snatched his coat from the back of the chair, and fumbled with it to put it on.

"Do not resist me, you traitor scum!" cried the Master, his white heat of rage blazing up for an instant. "Do not daur me! I ha'e no weapons but my hands, but I'll break ye to bits!"

O'Rhea had got his coat on. He set his legs wide, straddling all across the space between the table and the fire. Like Apollyon, he was void of fear, and full of the lust

of life. He vauntingly snapped his fingers, and defied the Master.

"I swear," he roared, "by all the gods that ever were, or will be, that I am delighted to meet you in this plain way, and to tell you plainly about yourself. You are a ruckle of conceit and idiocy, and I've fooled you to the top of your bent for my amusement! I!—I have done it!" And he rapped with the knuckles of his left hand on the table. "You know that! But let me tell you something you don't know. *Your brother George is not dead*, and you have spent his money! His money was my money; and I've got most of it—in the way of a ship, arms, stores, and a score or two of blackguard sailors and soldiers to do my bidding! Understand that! That I'd have done in any case, and let you alone! But you've insulted me twice over, and you've smacked my face, and now, by G—d, I'll spill your heart's blood!"

There was a flash of steel in his hand, and with both feet he sped his riotous bulk and strength upon the Master, who was little prepared to receive him; for though he had at first watched his enemy with gleaming eye and set mouth, the hint that his brother still lived had smitten him with confusion. They rocked and strove together, and the boy screamed; for to him it appeared as nothing less than a realisation of the picture in the Bible of Samson contending with the lion. The sobriety of the Master's life, and his muscles of steel, soon told. He was wounded somewhere, but his wound had only pricked him to greater fierceness of temper. He had caught the hand that held the knife; there was a crack, and a quick cry of agony from O'Rhea—"Oh, my God!"—and the knife fell with a clatter on the table. Then the Master put out all his strength, heaved his antagonist away from him, and lifting him up with a mighty effort dunched him to the floor, and stamped his foot on him.

"The rope, laddie!" panted the Master.

But in the struggle O'Rhea had got to the door side of the Master, and when he was thrown he lay but a foot or two from the threshold. At mention of the rope he wrenched himself forward, crouched upon his feet, and sprang into

the darkness and the wet of the storm. With a cry of rage the Master shot out after him. The bulky figure was but half a dozen yards before him, racing straight out into the moss, and he raced after it. But O'Rhea was running for life and freedom, and he drew steadily away from the Master, upon whom there came suddenly a fear to freeze his marrow. O'Rhea was dashing into the most dangerous part of the moss!"

"Come back!" he cried, with no thought but that of saving a creature from death, and raced on with new energy.

At length he stood still. O'Rhea had disappeared, and he dared not go farther. He thought he heard a wild cry, and listened. He heard only the swish of the rain, the exhausted rumbling of the storm in the remote east, and the melancholy cry of a peewit winging over the moss.

"If so," he murmured grimly to himself, "he's weel awa'!"

He lingered a little while, still listening, and letting the rain beat on his bare hot head, and then he returned to the house. There he found Hamish sobbing and trembling at the door.

"Poor loon," he murmured, "this has been an awfu' sight for you. But now we maun haud awa' hame. He *may* get ower the moss, and be in the town afore us." He picked up O'Rhea's knife from the table, saying, "This blade may be handy," put on his bonnet, gave his hand to the boy, and left the house.

In the brief interval the rain had much abated and a golden glory of sunset was growing in the west, and the birds in the remote fir wood were gratefully piping up their evening song. He took off his bonnet, softened and subdued. Tears filled his eyes.

"God forgi'e me," he murmured, "for I am a man of blood," and he flung O'Rhea's knife far into the moss. "Ay, ay. . . . The Lord is not in the wind, nor yet in the lightning, nor in the thunder, but in the still small voice that speaks in a man's heart. Come, my laddie, ye're tired and broken."

He put the weary, sobbing boy on his back, and strode away back to encounter what might lay before him in Ilkastane.

## CHAPTER XL.

### EXODUS.

As the Master made his weary way back to Ilkastane, his thoughts were in a turmoil of amazement. No more than two or three hours had passed since he had sat with his sweetheart in the train, but what a cataclysm of change in the interval! It seemed to be scarcely the same world in which he now lived and moved and had his being! The dripping woods and the purged air were charged with most delightful scents, and were vocal with the gushing songs of birds, but they brought no joy to his heart, as such things were wont to do—all that he loved, all that he hoped for, lay broken and ruined! The only invigorating and cheering hope in all his waste of thought and feeling was that his brother might be still alive—alive in some mysterious way, a captive, perhaps, in a foreign land, but still alive! And while he thought a strange thing happened. At the contact, as it were, of that living, smiling hope, the other hopes, desires, and plans, which had seemed as dead, began to stir and swell with life, and as the prophet in his vision of the valley of dry bones heard with amazement a noise and a shaking, and saw the bones come together and the flesh and sinews come upon them till the breath of God entered into the bodies and they stood upon their feet “an exceeding great army,” so the Master of Hutcheon perceived with joy his broken hopes and prospects rise as if from the dead, piece themselves again completely together, and stand up a connected, organic whole. O’Rhea had not been the destroyer he had hoped to be; indeed, there was little more necessary than that he should take the place that night which O’Rhea

had designed for himself, and the Argosy, full-freighted, might yet have her sails spread to the breeze before the dawn of a new day. So cheered and refreshed was he that he was inclined to cry, like the pilgrim in his final thrust against Apollyon, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! for, when I fall, I shall arise."

He had been slack in his duty; he had been over-credulous, and too trusting; he had been befooled and humiliated, without a doubt (and again his pride rose fiercely in revolt), but, surely, he had been put to a fiery trial during the last few hours. Now he was awake and alert; he saw all the difficulties and dangers that lay in his going forward, and he did not blench. It was no light task, he perceived, to take himself and his ship from under the arrest of the law, to summon his sweetheart and her brother to his side, to arouse his stupefied following and his disheartened, if not despairing, folk—and, withal, to avoid and defeat the vigilance of those in authority, and to get all his company and their *impedimenta* "clear off" and afloat within a few hours. He no longer could think he had the Queen's commission to act, but he believed he had the countenance of God Almighty, and how could he, without shame and confusion of soul, reduce and dash to the ground, like water completely spilt, the hopes of the folk which he had raised, and etherealised, and illumined, till they appeared to enwrap the seventh heaven? In the future there probably lay no Andaman, but there surely waited for them another island, as gracious and as smiling; and there was his brother to find, the alert and cheerful brother whose words once more sounded in his heart—" *There's hamely land and air in the world yet!*"

"I'll do it!" he said to himself. "And this night!"

By the time he reached Ilkastane the sky was quite clear, and when he turned into the loan he saw that many of its inhabitants—mostly women—were loitering in the fresh air, gossiping in sullen, earnest groups. The dejection of their manner, and their disregard of their children, who, having dammed up the rain-swollen gutters, were wading in the pools and noisily sailing chips to Andaman, smote

him anew with the necessity for rousing action. It did not please him that Hew Tamson stood tall and notable in the midst of the most considerable of the groups, nor that, as he approached, every group took the alarm, like a concourse of geese, and sharply dissolved and disappeared in the closes and doorways, so that as he passed no face was to be seen, and no greeting nor salutation uttered. Yet he had no suspicion that Ilkastane was on the point of rising against him.

As soon as he was in his garret he began the preparations which he had already drawn up in some order in his mind. To stay himself against the exertions of the next few hours, he ate some oat-cake, and took a draught of water (which he strengthened with a dash of usquebagh), instructing Hamish the while in certain things he wished him to do.

"Now, Hamish, laddie," said he, "I'm going to trust ye just the same as if ye were a grown man. Run first to the Bailie's house and say ye want a word wi' Maister George. Say naething afore the Bailie, but when ye get George by his lone tell him, 'The Maister needs ye this minute! And bring your sister and Elsie M'Cree along, and sic things as ye can carry, for this very night must we be off to sea!' Can ye mind on that? And syne find Steven, Wilson, and the rest o' them that are o' my Council—ye're my secretary, and ye ha'e their names—and bid them come to me this minute. And last o' a', gang to the stickit minister, and bring him here yoursel', drunk or sober! And now, awa' wi' ye!"

Hutcheon himself then began to put a few things together—not many, because in the situation in which he was he could not embarrass himself or his people with baggage, and because, moreover, Hamish had reported to him a saying which O'Rhea had dropped, namely, that proper clothing of all sorts, both for himself and his blackguards, had already been stowed on board. He was thus occupied when heavy, hurried footsteps were heard on the stairs, and Steven and Donald M'Kay, after a hasty tap, burst in upon him.

"By the Lord Harry! but we're in for't, Maister!" exclaimed Steven. "They're a' coming to rabble and stane ye! They've been birling the bree a' the way hame frae the toon; and the wives that havena are waur than the men!"

"The de'il's in them a'!" said Donald M'Kay. "They're just like the swine that ran down a steep place in the Bible!"

"Hew Tamson's been at them wi' his clavers!" said Steven. "That's what it is! It was him that set them aff into the toon wi' telling them that it was a' up wi' Andaman, and that you and O'Rhea were to be ta'en up for some fule's crime or other! They've heard ye're come back! . . . And hark ye! They're comin'!"

There was a distant subdued roar, which sounded at first like the noise of loosened waters, but which soon declared itself the utterance of human excitement and rage, thrilling the nerves as no other sound can. The Master had already heard it close to his ear in the town, and his expression of countenance became set and stern.

"Let them come!" said he. "I'll sort them this time!"

He found an old pistol, and the switch with which he had administered punishment to Tamson.

"For guid sake, Maister!" said Steven, standing for once stiff and appalled, "dinna shoot!"

"Shoot!" exclaimed the Master. "Wha says I'm going to shoot? This is a harmless thing enough. It's no the flash, man, that makes folk feared; it's the thought o't coming!"

"Let's gang doon and bar the door, Donald!" said Steven.

"De'il a door shall be barred!" said the Master. "We'll gang doon whenever they're here! They're just like a lot o' orra loons, and if they dinna behave them they must ha'e their paiks!" \*

"Demmit, sir!" said Steven, "I'm an auld sodger, and ye ha'e made me chief o' the Native Contingent, or I wouldna

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\* Paiks—Beating.



presume to offer advice to my shuperior officer! But demmit, sir, keep close inside your entrenchments! Ony way," he urged, seeing the Master unmoved, "bide till Donald and me ha'e a keek at them!"

The roar of many voices burst into the close, and a stone or other missile crashed on the window.

"Let me by!" said the Master, twisting Steven aside, and descending the stair, followed by both the old soldiers.

There was a sullen hesitating rumble of execration when he appeared, and sporadic cries of "Here he is! . . . Down wi' him! . . . Out wi' the traitor!" And then above all was heard the voice of Tamson, who stood tall in the midst of the rabble, "Ye'd better gi'e up, Mr. Hutcheon, and we'll be good enough to tak' ye back to the Fiscal oursel's!" at which there was a mirthless guffaw.

"Silence!" cried the Master, and there was a fierce vibration in his voice such as the folk had never heard before. "We ha'e no time to waste! One traitor ye'll never see again—I mean the villain O'Rhea—and another we'll soon ha'e done wi'! Steven and Donald, gang an keep the mouth o' the close that naebody pass ye!—and, Hew Tamson, stand out! Dinna hide ahint the women!"

Hew Tamson at the first uproariously laughed, but the Master raised his empty pistol and pointed it at him. There was something so deliberate and unflinching in the action, and such terrible, consuming anger in the master's face, that a palpable shudder ran through the rabble.

"Eh, sirs!" a woman murmured to her neighbour, "there's murder in his face."

Tamson clearly had the same impression and the same thought. His loud laugh sank to something like a whimper, his red skin became as blanched as that of the beast he so notably resembled, and, with his eyes fixed in terror on the pistol, he slowly came forward.

"Rob Taggart," said the Master, addressing a young man well to the front, "hand over that bonnie rope ye ha'e! And Steven and Donald, come here and tie me up that swine. Rope him weel, till I see what's to be done wi' him! . . . And Rob, stand ye out!—and Tam Lamont.

Come your ways, or it'll be the waur for ye!" He covered them with the threat of the pistol, and out they stepped, looking exceeding frightened. "Now," cried the Master, "wha will tie me them up? They ha'e both been to the fore in this ado, and I maun mak' them siccar for good behaviour!" Two young men stepped forward, who were not only of Ilkastane but of the Master's own immediate following. "Good for you!" said Hutcheon. "I thought my Andamaners could ha'e little to do wi' this!" In his heart of hearts he believed no such thing, but for very shame he kept his mind averted from their treachery. "Tie them wi' their own napkins or onything, and bundle them into the weaving-shop there! And now, ye fause, sorning limmers!" he cried, raising his head, and bending on the crowd a look of deadly severity, "I ha'e a word to say to ye! Because ye ha'e seen me mostly a quiet man, ye ha'e mista'en me! You and others ha'e daured to set yoursel's against me!" At the sound of his voice, and under his lofty, blighting look, they shivered, and wondered that they had ever mistaken him. "You, and others that ha'e misguided ye, ha'e done your best to ruin the business ye well kenned I was bent on! But now, this minute, ye'll change a' that! Ye'll no mak' another cheep o' disturbance!—and ye'll set to and help the folk that are going awa' wi' me to get aff this very night! Ye'll do that, or, as sure as God made me and gave me authority, I'll hang the three I ha'e tied up, and two-three mair o' ye! I ha'e made short wark o' the traitor O'Rhea, and I will o' you!" At the hint of the terrible O'Rhea's fate the crowd exchanged looks of fear and horror. "And to my Andamaners a word," continued the Master. "Dinna cumber your hands wi' useless things. Ye'll find a' ye need on board the ship; and be ready to set off wi' me in an hour! And if there's ony at this last hour feared to gang, let them come to me at ance and they'll get a bounty o' a pound for the trouble they've been put to! Now, off wi' ye, and set to!"

And the crowd speedily dissolved, murmuring to each other, "Eh, sirs, but he's an awfu' man! Wha'd ha' thought it?"

After that signal victory over the rabble the wavering and the timid came forward again. The King's Council assembled about the King ; no one cried off from the bargain of Andaman, and preparations went on apace. In a little while Hamish returned with the minister, who had engaged to accompany the expedition, and who now appeared with his wardrobe tied up in a napkin under one arm, his *Virgil* tucked under the other, and a volume or two peeping from his pockets. Hamish reported that George Lepine and his female company would arrive as soon as the Bailie had gone to his room at half-past ten.

In the event, George came close on the heels of Hamish, accompanied by Aimée and Elsie M'Cree. All three looked resolute, but anxious, and Aimée wore a look of enthusiasm which her companions lacked. The Master drew her a little aside to press her hand. She surreptitiously kissed it.

"Oh, my dear Master, you are safe!" she murmured.

"And you're no feared now to go?" he asked.

"Feared? No!" she answered. "I am feared of nothing with you! And I will go with you to the end of the world!"

The Master's only answer was a renewed pressure of the hand, and the words—which he uttered with intention—"There's a minister going wi' us."

Then the Master and George and the Council consulted together, and a happy thought was hit upon. It was an anxious consideration how the women and children were to be got over the weary way to the ship: why should not the Bailie be made to contribute his aid to carry them there? The Bailie's Hargate Mill was but a little way off, and the lorries and big Clydesdale horses that drew his manufactures into the town were stabled there; it was therefore settled that George should go on to the mill with several Ilkastane men who were not Andamaners, and get the lorries ready to carry the women and bairns.

Thus it was arranged, and thus it was done. In less than an hour, five lorries, drawn by big grey Clydesdales, rolled down the loan. The women and weans and the children were packed on them, with their small array of necessary

luggage, and the usual coverings of the piles of cloth were drawn over them, so that the lorries might appear merely to be loaded in their ordinary way. That done, the whole pilgrimage was ready to set out—notable among the men and the few women that followed the lorries afoot being Kitty M'Cree—whom her father had prevailed to come only by lying to her and assuring her that her “man” was gone on before—and the three bound captives, who were being conveyed as far as the ship for the sake of security.

It was then half-past eleven, and the Master was eager to reach the water-corner of Strang's shipyard at midnight; for Hamish had told him of the arrangement which O'Rhea had disclosed to meet his blackguard sailors and soldiers there at that hour. It was absolutely necessary to face and subdue to his purpose the sailors, at least; for how was the ship to be got out of the harbour and navigated without them? The Master discussed the matter with his friends, and several wished to accompany him to prevail on the sailors. But the Master refused their offers of aid.

“No,” he said, “I'll go my lone. It's best. We're a' ower few to frighten them, and I must trust to being able to persuade them.”

So he marched off ahead of the whole company, who were to take a lonelier and more circuitous route than that which he chose. When he was setting off, however, Hamish set up such a cry of grief and desolation that he was fain to take him along with him. For the sake of speed he set the boy on his back.

When he had got on his own road, he stopped an instant and looked back on the pilgrimage—the string of grey horses and white-covered waggons, and the dark procession on foot—all trudging steadily and silently forward on the bare, lonely road in the mystic twilight which in the north pervades the darkest hour of a midsummer night.

“It looks gey strange and eerie!” he murmured. “A' going out frae their auld homes—going out in faith, and no kenning what's afore us! Poor things! . . . Lord, Lord, it seems more than I can manage! . . . But we'll gang for-

ward, laddie!" he said in a firmer, more cheerful tone, and he strode on again.

On, on he paced through the calm, silent, fresh night, and at length he turned the corner of Strang's shipyard, and braced himself to meet O'Rhea's blackguardly crew. He was still armed only with his empty pistol and his switch, but he had a firm, fearless mind. He spied a tarry-breeks lurking in the shadows, and he went up to him.

"You know me," said the Master. "Tak' a look at me."

"Ay," said the sailor, "I ken ye fine. Ye're him they ca' the Maister."

"Ye're on the outlook for Fergus O'Rhea?" said the Master.

"Maybe," was the guarded answer.

"Tut! D'ye imagine I dinna know the hail business o' your arrangement to meet wi' him here at midnight? Come. Tak' me to ha'e a word wi' the rest. There's no time to be lost! De'il ha'e't, man! D'ye think I ha'e a dozen policemen wi' me?"

The man grunted, but led on, and exchanged a word with his comrades. From their hiding in a tumble-down corner of the shipyard came more than a dozen sailors, but no soldiers appeared.

"Whaur are the red-coats?" asked the Master, doubting there might be some lurking treachery.

"They're no come," answered one. "D—n them! A' thing's gane wrang!"

The tone was one of dejection and anxiety, and the Master took quick advantage of their mood.

"Ye're the skipper, are ye no?" he demanded of the man who had spoken.

"Ay, that's me," was the answer.

"Weel, I ha'e a word to say, skipper," continued the Master. "O'Rhea's gone; ye'll see him no more. Ye ken what that means to you, and I ken, too, for I am now acquaint wi' the whole trick that the villain O'Rhea thought to befool me wi'. Weel, I'm here, and he's no here; it

doesna tak' a long head to interpret the sense o' that. You and your men were on the side o' the traitor. Your right hand was wi' him, but your left only was for me, your real employer. Oh, just listen a minute. This is the time for speaking plain and straight, and I'm in a hurry. Now, wi' you, or wi'out you, I'm going to sail away in my ship within an hour. I ha'e plenty men wi' me to contrive to do without ye, but I'd rayther ha'e your help—the help o' your right hands, ye understand, no your left. Now tak' your wale: bide here and dree your weird, or come wi' me and tak' your chance. Gi'e me your answer."

"Gi'e me an instant, Mr. Hutcheon, to consult wi' my mates," said the skipper.

"Till I count a score," answered the Master.

The skipper and his company hurriedly drew together, and in less time than it took to count a score the skipper signified with a cough that his answer was ready.

"Weel?" demanded the Master.

"Weel, ye see, Maister," said the skipper, "our kists wi' a' our belongings are on the ship, and we've signed our articles, and so, wi' your leave, we'll sail wi' ye."

"That's settled," said the Master promptly. "And now we maun advise about getting the arrest-men off the ship."

There the skipper was ready with his word. He had already discovered that the arrest-men numbered half a dozen, and his plan had been to retake the ship from them by rowing softly in the two boats they had at hand and surprising them from the water. The suggestion seemed good to the Master, and he accepted it; and then they agreed that he and his friends should be ready to attack on the shore side of the ship at the same moment as the sailors were ready to swarm up from the water, and that the signal for attack should be the cry of a sea-gull from the skipper.

In that accord they parted, and the Master hurried off to find his following. He discovered them lurking behind the shed which has already been mentioned. The lorries with their loads were waiting, as had been arranged, a little way

off. The Master whispered what success he had had, and the plan of attack; and then they all waited with beating hearts and fevered impatience.

The night was calm and serene, and there was no sound but the soft lap of the retiring tide; and still they waited. Suddenly the cry of a gull broke on the ear of the night, and with a whispered "Now!" the Master and his following swept round from the shelter of the shed and rushed to the ship. The gangway had been removed, but all were now desperate, and they leaped on board—some with a clear jump, others with a trailing scramble—at the same instant as they heard a muffled cry or two from below, and saw dimly a man on deck strike another down.

In a few seconds the six men who were in possession of the ship were bound and gagged. In a few seconds more the gangway was softly run ashore, and the captives were carried into the shed, there to be left with Tamson and his two companions from Ilkastane. Again a few minutes, and the women and children were hurriedly flitting down among the shadows, and the lorries were being driven back to the Hargate Mill. With trembling fingers and fluttering breath the Ilkastane men undid the moorings. The ship began to move, and there was among all a temptation to utter a yell of relief and delight.

"Quick, but steady!" were the words, however, which the steel-nerved Master passed around.

The topsails were hoisted, and the sailors tumbled back into the two boats, to row as for dear life and tow the ship out, for there was but the merest capful of soft wind. Graciously and steadily the ship swam after them. The tide had run so low that on crossing the bar she almost grounded. But she rose on a swelling wave, and then with a dip of her bows swam into deep water.

"Thank God!" fervently exclaimed the Master. The little lady by his side put her hand in his, and all around echoed "Thank God!"

The sailors scrambled on board, all the sails were spread

to the breeze, and the ship stood away with the two boats dragging at her stern.

At length the weary pilgrims were on the wide, salt sea, sailing away to greet the dawn that was rising to meet them over the edge of the horizon—away to find a new, an unknown life, in a new and unknown land !

THE END.

















